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HONI SOIT QVI MAL Y PENSE
DIEV ET MON DROIT


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THE CAUSES OF THE Decay of Christian Piety.

OR AN

IMPARTIAL SURVEY

Of the Ruines of

CHRISTIAN RELIGION,

Undermin'd by Unchristian Practice.

Written by the Author

OF THE

Whole Duty of Man.

LONDON,

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TO THE BOOKSELLER.

SIR,

HAVING in my hands a *Practical* Treatise concerning *The Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety* so visible in this our Age; written by the Excellent *Author* of The *WHOLE DUTY OF MAN*: and having obtain'd permission to make it publick, I was in some doubt whether the present disturb'd State of affairs, would not make it reasonable to delay the Edition: but considering that times of difficulty and trouble bring thoughts of Vertue into their minds, who forgot their Duty and their God in affluence and quiet: I am apt to think a Discourse of this kind seasonable enough at this time.

Almighty God give you some repair for your * late great Calamity: As it was the *Authors* kindness that you should have the offer of this Tract, whatever it prove, so I think it will be a little the more seasonable, that it comes as a New-years Gift, &c.

* *The late Fire in* London.

Your very loving Friend,

January, 1667.

H. E.

THE PREFACE.

THOUGH this be the first appearance this Tract has made in the world, yet its Being is of somewhat a more ancient date; it having received its lineaments and perfect form some years since: when the Author not having partiality enough to think it worthy publick view; had judg'd it, if not to perpetual darkness, yet at least to a long indefinite suspension from seeing light. In this interval, 'tis more than probable some passages may have lost much of their propriety to the present state of affairs, they having been adapted to circumstances which may since have received some change: and herein I must bespeak the Readers candor, to make such allowances as the matter shall require; of which yet I suppose there will not occur very many, or very important occasions.

BUT would God I were to Apologize for a yet far greater absurdity, that our scene were so shifted, that the whole design of the ensuing discourse might become one intire impertinence, and that our more eminent conformity to the rules of our Christian institution, might supercede these disquisitions above our failancies and aberration. But alas, I find I have pitcht upon a subject not like to be out-dated: vice daily gaining not only strength but impudence: nay we are not only become witnesses against our selves by declaring our Sin as Sodom, but we have forced God also to attest against us by punishing us in a manner no less conspicuous and manifest. And surely then 'tis more than time for us to take the Prophets advice, Hag. 1: 7. to consider our ways, to reflect not only on those robust gyant-like provocations which have thus bid defiance to Heaven; but also to lift out those secret incendiaries that have inflamed us to this mad daring; to examine what that חמר, that inflamable bitumen, the untemper'd morter is with which

which we build our Babel, *by discovering those misperswasions and false confidences, wherein many of other guilts are founded: in order to which this slight Tract offers its feeble, yet well-meant aids; being forced out of its retirement, and like* Crœsus *his dumb Son, compell'd to speak by impulse of the present exigent: and how despicable soever the Mite contributed be in it self, yet if it may provoke the more wealthy to cast in richer gifts, it may prove no unprofitable agent for the* Corban. *'Tis evident this is a season which not only warrants, but exacts the most importunate endeavours of perswading men to those things that belong to their Peace.*

FOR *although 'tis true, that every state of sin sets us also in a state of hostility with God, yet our present condition seems to have advanced us beyond the common degrees even of that. 'Tis, we know, high insolence against a Prince to despise and violate his laws, but when to that are superadded contumelies, and design'd affronts to his person, this is such an accumulated outrage, as will vanquish the most resolv'd Patience. And this alas appears to be our case: we have long indulg'd to our selves the breach of all Divine laws, gratified every appetite, every passion and lust with the forfeiture of our allegiance, and as if this would not serve to render us irreconcileable enough to God, we are now grown to subjoyn malice to licentiousness; project not so much to please our selves, as to displease Him; profess a contempt not only of his commands, but himself; and seek no less to dethrone Him, than abrogate those. Thus have we made it a kind of personal quarrel, and by those impious blasphemies we daily dart against* Heaven, *do, as it were, dare the Divine Majesty to vindicate it self. Whether his great longanimity may have given our* Hectors *a fancy, that they had vapour'd God (as they are us'd to do men) into a tameness, I shall not examine: but his late proceedings with us sufficiently testifie that he means no longer to decline our challenge. He now appears to avow the enmity as openly as we have done; and has already given us competent essays, how* fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, *Heb.* 10. 31.

'TIS true indeed that he has formerly own'd his controversie with our Land, and by a long series of great and heavy calamities attested himself the God to whom vengeance belongeth, Psal. 94: 1. *Yet as great Monarchs use to quell lesser insurrections by their Lieutenants, and subordinate Officers, but when the rebellion grows high and desperate, then to encounter it in their own persons; so is it here observeable that God then Chastised, and tried to reduce us by inferior instruments, found us out* Lictors *among our selves, and made one mans sin the punishment of anothers: but now as if he had the same jealousie for his honour which* Joab *had at the siege of* Rabba *for* Davids, 2 Sam. 12: 28. *as if he fear'd to be rival'd in the glory of our ruine, he takes us in his own hand, marks us out, as he did* Pharaoh, *to be the Trophies of his own peculiar vengeance, appearing signally against us in all the dreadful solemnities of an enraged enemy.*

FOR first, has he not as Moses *speaks,* Deut. 32: 41. *whet his glittering* Swords? *Nay, has he not moreover (in the Scripture stile) made it drunk with bloud? by sweeping away multitudes of us in a raging PESTILENCE, which March't from one part of the Nation to another in a kind of Triumphant progress, as if it had receiv'd the same mandate God gave* Abraham, *Gen.* 13: 17. Arise, walk through the land, in the length thereof, and in the breadth thereof, for unto thee will I give it. *Whether it may not thus fatally complete its course, notwithstanding the halt it seems to make, and pass from our* Dan *to our* Beersheba, *is a question that can with no probability be resolv'd in the negative; for as it is not to be doubted but there were in* Judea *as great sinners as those on whom the Tower of* Siloam *fell,* Luke 13. *that those who have hitherto escaped have an equal share in the provoking cause of the Judgement: So also that great* unsensibleness *many of us shew of what others groan under, is a very ominous abode; it being not only a dangerous symptome, but a probable means of drawing that calamity to our selves. When God sees we will suffer nothing by way of consent and sympathy with others, 'tis but equal we have our*

our part in a more direct and immediate infliction, and feel what we would not compassionate. Thucydides *mentions it as the effect of the great Plague at* Athens, *that it had extinguisht humanity; brought in a kind of ferity and barbarousness among them, rendring them openly villanous to men, and blasphemous against God;* ὅτε φόβου ἦν ἀνθρώπων νόμος ὁτιοῦν ἀπεῖργε, *there was no restraint of law or religion, one part being desperate upon prospect of their danger, the other presumptuous upon the contemplation of their Escape; and sure if we look impartially, ours will appear to have had somewhat of the same operation. Those compassions which the novelty it seems at first gave us to sufferers in this kind, seems now quite extinct; so unconcerned are we grown to every thing that touches us not in our individuals, as if we owned no relation to the* species *of mankind, though backt also with that closer tye, which the spiritual consanguinity has superseded. A pregnant indication of this may, I doubt not, be collected (as from many other circumstances, so particularly) from the great haste has in many places been made, to lay aside those publick* Humiliations *and Intercessions which were recommended to us, as well by the command of Authority, as the common distress; but have been cast off without the substraction of either of those motives. Whether we are duly* mindful of the afflictions of Joseph, *that cannot afford one day in a month for a solemn reflection on them, I must leave to every mans conscience to discuss. But sure we are no less wanting to our selves than them in this neglect; the office being no less designed for Antidote than cure, to prevent the judgement where it is not, than to remove it where it is: and if we will neither deprecate on our own behalfs, nor intercede on others; we are sure as improvident, as uncharitable, and may justly expect the fatal event of both.*

IN *the interim, although the present respite from destruction, and our own deceitful hearts flatter us, and say* Peace, Peace; *we have all reason to conclude that God is not attoned, the quarrel and hostility goes on, and his* hand is stretched out still, Es. 5:25. *And so indeed we find it in other dismal*

events. Slaughter we know is not the only effect of War; which as it deſtroys the lives of many, blaſts the ſupports and Joys of more. This conſequence of hoſtility we find well expreſt by the Prophet, Joel 2: 3. The land is as the Garden of *Eden* before them, and behind them a deſolate wilderneſs, *and herein alſo hath the Lord of Hoſts, the great God of battel ſhewed himſelf mighty againſt us, he has invaded us not only with Sword, but FIRE: and in ſo ſtupendious manner deſolated the glory of our Land, that no humane fury could have procured, or even have wiſht the like vaſtation and ruines.* That City which was great among the Nations, and Princeſs among the Provinces, *Lam.* 1: 1. lies buried in her own Aſhes, *and is both Funeral pile and Urn to her ſelf, and what neither foreign nor domeſtick enemies could in a ſucceſſion of many ages effect, one blaſt of the breath of his diſpleaſure*, Pſal. 18. *has performed in a moment. So verifying even in a literal ſence the Apoſtles affirmation*, Heb. 12: 29. that our God is a conſuming fire. Plutarch *tells us when* Fabius *ſackt* Tarentum, *he took not away their Images, but ſaid*, Χωλεπαίνωμεν τοὺς θεοὺς Ταραντίνοις κεχολωμένους, Let us leave the *Tarentines* their Gods that are offended with them. *'Tis our Calamity to be ſignally under the indignation of our incenſed God, which in that great Captains judgement was ſomewhat more dreadful than the worſt inflictions of War: For what induſtry ſoever has been uſed to entitle either the negligence or deſigns of men unto our overthrow, yet ſure never any judgement had more legible marks of Gods immediate hand: ſuch as ſhew he meant to revenge the abuſe of his former gentle methods: that thoſe who would not be reformed by the ſlighter corrections wherein he dallied with them, might find* a judgement worthy of God, Wiſd. 12: 26. *And ſure ſuch was this, which both for its greatneſs and irreſiſtibleneſs does well own its Author, and ſhews his wrath was accended to a very exceſſive heat, that thus poured out it ſelf not only like, but in Fire*, Lam. 2: 4.

I SHALL not here aſſume the Politicians part, and weigh the detriment we have ſuſtained by it in our civil intereſt,

reſt, of which perhaps nothing but time and experience can give us a full eſtimate; It rather ſuits my deſign to obſerve what relates to our ſpiritual concerns, whilſt Gods dwelling places *were involved in the ſame ruine with ours; his own peculiar portion not exempted, but as the Prophet complains,* Eſ. 64: 11. Our holy and beautiful houſes where our fathers praiſed him are burnt with fire: *This, though perhaps leaſt conſidered, is ſure not the leaſt ſad circumſtance, had only the ſcenes of our luxury, or our fraud been deſtroyed, it might have ſent us with more fervency to the places of our devotion, and we might have frequented Gods houſes the better, for being deſtitute of our own; but when theſe alſo are made parts of the common heap, 'tis a ſad teſtimonial that our very Religion was provoking; That that pageant like piety which we depoſited in our* CHURCHES, *only to make a ſhew with on holy-days, ſerved only to defile thoſe holy places, and render them ſo polluted as required no ſlighter purgation than that of* FIRE. *'Tis, we know, not long, ſince thoſe manſions ſacred to the Prince of Peace, were even in the vulgar obvious ſence, made magazines for War; but yet more ſo in reference to that Pulpit-wild-fire, which ſet the Nation in combuſtion; whether that ſtrange Fire which ſome of our* Nadabs *and* Abihus *introduced there, may not, (even at this diſtance) have done its part to the drawing down this* FIRE *from Heaven, I leave to their ſerious reflection. But neither the* Hypocrite *nor the* Seditious *muſt ingroſs the guilt of this ruine: The* Atheiſt *eyes with both; for alas, what ſhould God do with Temples among thoſe, who pay him no worſhip? Or why ſhould he let thoſe ſacred monuments remain among them, to whom all memorials of him ſerve but as occaſions, and incentives to blaſpheme him? They have long ſaid with thoſe in* Job, Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy ways; *and now 'tis but equitable (I had almoſt ſaid* Civil) *to take them at their word, and no longer reſide among thoſe who avowedly diſclaim him.*

AND this, 'tis much to be feared, may be the portent of this diſmal waſtation: we know men uſe not to deface thoſe

houſes, where they intend to inhabit: and ſure this abhorring his Sanctuary, *and* caſting off his Altar, Lam. 2. *is a dreadful ſign, that he means no longer to continue his reſidence among us; indeed we find in Scripture that his promiſe of cohabiting is always limited to thoſe who own themſelves his people; and therefore when ſo many of us have openly renounced that relation, we can with no juſtice expect the bleſſing appendant to it.*

BUT perhaps this will ſeem to ſuch no formidable thing; Gods ſo withdrawing of himſelf is but agreeable to their wiſhes, a kind of quitting the field to them, and ſo rather matter of complacency than regret: but 'tis to be conſidered that there is another preſence of God that will infallibly ſucceed this; when he removes that of his grace, 'tis to make way for that of his anger; like the Philiſtines *we ſhall know the God of* Iſrael *is among us by his Plagues;* 1 Sam. 5. *or to make a yet more dreadful compariſon, we ſhall, like the damned in Hell, diſcern his preſence only in the punitive effects of it, and read his nearneſs in our ſufferings. And ſure this will be but an ill exchange, even to the profaneſt of us, thoſe that have moſt deſpiſed or loathed the ſoft breathings of his Word and Spirit; will find it yet harder to endure the whirlwinds of his wrath, which will ſnatch from us thoſe ſecular advantages for whoſe purſuit we have neglected* the better part, Luke 10: 42. *and leave us as little of worldly enjoyments, as we deſired to have of ſpiritual.*

OF this our late Calamities have given us a ſad Præludium *and God knows how ſoon we may ſee the laſt ſcene of the fatal Tragedy, it being too probable that this is Gods laſt Experiment upon us, like the Cauſticks and Scarifyings to a Lethargick Patient; if this bring us not to ſenſe, we are like to ſleep on to deſtruction: And alas, what uncomfortable ſymptomes appear even in this point alſo! Who is there that (unleſs awakened by his perſonal concernments) ſeems at all to ſtartle at the noiſe of publick ruine? When God in diſpleaſure threatned the* Iſraelites *that he would remit their conduct to his* Angel, *and not go himſelf with them. The Text ſays,* They

They mourned and no man put on his ornaments on him, *Exod.* 33: 4. *or as the* LXX, κατεπένθησεν εν πενθικοῖς· They mourned in mourning. *But the Syricak*, They ſtript themſelves of their Armour, their ruffling garb of War, and appeared in the penitential dreſs of ſackcloth and aſhes: *but now that we are given up not to a conducting but deſtroying Angel, what ſigns of remorſe do we ſhew? What vanity (I fear I may ask what vice) have we ſubſtracted, upon the ſenſe of Gods anger? What nicety in cloaths or diet have we cut off in ſympathy with the nakedneſs and hunger of our afflicted brethren? Nay, do not the unreaſonable Jollities of too many among us, look as if we triumpht in their miſeries, found Muſick in the diſcordant ſounds of their groans, and our own laughter; and emulated that infamous barbarity of* Nero, *who played while* Rome *burned? 'Tis mentioned by the Prophet as a moſt prepoſterous thing, a kind of impious Soleciſm to revel under the menace of judgements.* Thus ſaith the Lord, a ſword, a ſword, it is ſharpned to make a ſore ſlaughter, it is furbiſhed that it may glitter, *ſhould we then make mirth?* Ezek. 21: 9, 10. *and certainly it leſs befits us againſt whom God has not only prepared, but uſed his ſword; who are not only under the threats, but actual Execution of his vengeance: And what is it but interpretatively to prompt him to yet ſharper inflictions, by ſhewing him that theſe have not edge enough to penetrate us? With how much indignation God reſents this perverſe, this contumelious behaviour, we may read,* Eſay 22: 12, 13, 14. In that day did the Lord call to weeping, and mourning, and to baldneſs, and to girding with ſackcloth, and behold joy and gladneſs, ſlaying Oxen and killing Sheep, eating Flesh and drinking Wine; eating and drinking for to morrow we ſhall dye: *Upon which follows that ſevere denunciation:* Syrely this iniquity ſhall not be purged from you till you dye. *Of ſo deep a tincture is this guilt, that 'tis as laſting as our lives, and like the fretting* leproſie *in the houſe,* Levit. 14: 45. *can be removed by nothing but its diſſolution.*

O *then let us not add this to the heap of our other provoca-*

tions, miſtake impudence or deſperation for courage; and frantickly deſie that omnipotence which we are ſure we cannot reſiſt: but ſince it has pleaſed God even in wrath to remember mercy, let us tranſcribe his Copy, be as kind to our ſelves as he has been to us, and ſtop in our career as he has done in his; not ſo madly affect a full parallel with Sodom *and* Gomorrha, *as to force him to deſtroy that remnant,* Eſ. 1: 9. *which alone diſtinguiſhes our caſe: but rather take pattern from* Nineveh; *cry, and* cry mightily to God, *joyn humiliation to our prayers, and reformation to both. And could we be perſwaded to do this with the ſame ſincerity, and univerſality, we might hope it may be with the ſame ſucceſs alſo: would every one who has contributed to the accending, as induſtriouſly contribute to the appeaſing of Gods wrath: would all who have brought their fire-brands bring alſo their tears to quench them; as there would be no dry Eyes in the* Nation *at the preſent, ſo might it prevent as great a Generality of weeping ones for the future; ſecure us ſuch a tranquillity here, as may calmly convoy us to that impaſſible ſtate,* where all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, where there shall be no more death, nor ſorrow, nor crying, nor pain, *Rev.* 21: 4.

THE

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CHAP. I.

The Character of Christian Religion, demonstrating its aptitude to plant exemplary Vertue and Sanctity.

THE holy *Psalmist* gives it as part of the Character of Pious persons, and therewithal a description of their felicity, *Psal.* 92: 13. *That they shall bring forth more fruit in their Age:* and what he thus observes of the members disjunctively and apart, reason suggests to be in a higher and more eminent manner appliable to the whole body united: And it being as well the mark as duty of every single Christian *to grow in grace*, 2 *Pet.* 3: 18. we may by all rules of Proportion conclude, that the collective masse of such, the whole Church is by this time near *attained to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*, *Eph.* 4: 3. And indeed this is so regular an inference, that whilst the premisses stand firm 'tis impossible to shake the conclusion, the entire body must necessarily augment answerably to the growth of its several parts. And if we should so far let loose to speculation as to forget our experience, if we measure the effect only by the power and energy of the cause, we should surely be as far from doubting the premisses also. Christianity is in it self of so prolifick a nature, so apt to impregnate the hearts and lives of its proselytes, that it is hard to imagine, that any branch should want a due fertility that is engrafted into so vigorous a stock.

FOR first, in its spring and original it is most supernatural and divine, derived immediately from him, who had nothing more of man than he purposely assumed to draw us the nearer to him as God. He it was that disseminated this doctrine, and that in order to the *purifying to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works*; and certainly his choice abundantly justifies its propriety to that end, and his descent from Heaven on that errand puts so venerable a solemnity upon it, that though his descent were very astonishing, yet it will be much more so, that it should fail of the designed effect.

AND

AND indeed did our Faith give us no clue to lead us to the Author, yet its composition would speak it to be of no humane extraction, its precepts are so excellent and refined, so agreeable to the more spiritual part of our temper, and so apt, as to foretal, so to cleanse and sublimate the more gross and corrupt, as shews flesh and bloud never revealed it. Nay farther, so effectually providing for all those advantages to mankind, which the wisest of mens laws have in vain attempted, that methinks they all stand before it like the *Magicians* before *Moses*, and by their impotence tacitly confess it to be the finger of God. 'Twere too large a Theme to confront them in the several instances, let it suffice to observe one which has a common influence on all; and that is the immaculate *cleanness* of heart, which Christs, and only Christs law requires. This is the only proper *basis* on which to superstruct, first *innocency*, and then *vertue*, and without this the most rigid exactors of outward purity, do but transcribe the folly of him, who Pumps very laboriously in a Ship, yet neglects to stop the Leak: or the worse tyranny of *Pharaoh*, in *requiring Brick without Straw*: so far is it from a severity in our law-giver, thus to limit and restrain our thoughts, that it is an act of the greatest indulgence: by no means the laying on a new burden, but the furnishing us with an Engine to bear with ease that weight which otherwise the stoutest *Atlas* must sink under. And were but this one precept sincerely conformed to, it would not only facilitate but ascertain the obedience to all the rest. If the *first sparks* of ill were quencht within, what possibility is there they should ever break out into a flame? How shall he *kill* that dares not be angry? be *Adulterous* in act, that did not first transgress in his desire? How shall he be *perjured* that fears an oath? or *defraud* that permits not himself to covet? In the like manner all *positive acts* of vertue are but the natural effects of the interior habit. Where the love of God is seated in the Heart, 'twill operate in all the faculties, keep them in a busie endeavour of doing acceptable service: when *fear* is planted there, it will break forth into outward reverence and duty; and so proportionable 'twill be in every other instance. 'Tis therefore an advice well becoming the wisdom of *Solomon*, *Prov.* 4. *To keep the heart with all diligence*: but then it is withal the work of him who is greater than *Solomon* to teach us how to

to do this: for *unless he keep that City the watchman waketh but in vain.* If he instruct not to secure those issues of life, they will betray and ruin, appear indeed *the savour of death unto death.* Now of this divine art of *Tacticks* and defence, Christianity is the only School, and therefore most fitly qualified for the producing all those supernatural excellencies, to which the timely prepossession of the heart is the rudiment and principle.

AND as the *preceptive* part enjoyns the most exact and elevated vertue, so is it most advantageously enforc'd by the *Promissory*, which both in respect of the kind and value of the rewards, and also the manner of proposing them, is most exquisitely adapted to the same end.

FOR first, if we consider the nature of the things promised, we shall find they are not gross and *carnal*, such as may court and gratifie the bestial part of us; but such as are proportioned to the supreme and leading principle, as feast a *Soul*, and suit with the capacities of an *intelligence.* All the beatitudes the Gospel tenders to its votaries, either relate to the *purity* or peace of the mind in this life; or else to its completer *felicity* hereafter. And though 'tis true, the body is not wholly unconsidered, though the addition of all temporal necessaries be promised, yet even those are for the Souls sake, either to secure it from the sin of solicitude and distrust, or to preserve it a useful instrument for the others service. And as for the future glory in which the body is to partake, 'tis to be observed, that flesh and bloud cannot inherit it; that load of earth which now engages to corruption must be put off, must be calcin'd and spiritualiz'd; and thus made glorious, be clothed upon with Glory. So that in all the Gospel dispensation, there is no *provision for the flesh*, its lusts and sensualities. And then sure there cannot be a more unanswerable argument against our providing for it, than to see it left out of Gods care. Indeed had we proposals of a *Mahumetan* Paradise, were we to expect our bliss only in the satiating our appetites, it might be reasonable here to whet them before-hand, to stretch them to the utmost wideness, or in the Prophets phrase, *to enlarge our desires as Hell*, and by frequent antepasts excite our gust for that profuse perpetual meal. Or were we only to have our portion in this life, to enjoy an uninterrupted affluence of outward comforts,

'twere

'twere but good husbandry to improve them to the height, and the Wise mans advice would then cease to be Irony, *Eccles.* 12: 9. *Rejoyce, O young man, and let thy heart chear thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and the sight of thine Eyes.* Had we only the prospect of a *Canaan*, such an eternal inheritance as a conquering Sword could give, as the salvation of a *Joshua*, and the affluence of milk and hony could produce: 'twould be no wonder, if we never voluntarily endured the thirst and famine of the wilderness, but be always, as they, desiring meat for our lust, projecting the gratifying those desires in whose repletion we placed our happiness. But when our Religion makes us no such tender, when all its hopes are of another make, invite to those Diviner joys of which sensuality has no capacity or taste. What pretence can we have to cherish that *here*, which we must wholly be devested of *hereafter*? Those immaterial felicities we expect, do naturally suggest to us, the necessity of preparing our appetites, and hungers for them, without which Heaven can be no Heaven to us: for since the pleasure of any thing results from the agreement between it and the desire, what satisfaction can *Spiritual* enjoyments give unto a *Carnal* mind? Alas, what delight would it be to the Swine to be wrapt in fine Linnen, and laid in Odours? his senses are not gratified by any such delicacies, nor would he feel any thing besides the torment of being withheld from the mire. And as little complacency would a brutish Soul find in those purer and resin'd pleasures, which can only upbraid, not satisfie him. So that could we by an impossible supposition phancy such a one assumed to those fruitions, his pleasure sure would be as little as his preparation for it was. Those *eyes* which have continually beheld vanity, would be dazled, not delighted with the *Beatifick vision*; neither could that *Tongue*, which has accustomed it self only to Oaths and Blasphemies, find Harmony or Musick in *Hallelujah*. 'Tis the peculiar priviledge of the pure in heart, *that they shall see God*; and if any others could so invade this their incloſure, as to take Heaven by violence, it surely would be a very joyless possession to these men, and only place them in a condition to which they have the greatest aversation and Antipathy. So that holiness here, is not only necessary to the acquiring, but the enjoyment of Bliss hereafter: And therefore unless men will contrive to annihilate

late their joys, and affect the monstrous riddle of being tormented in Heaven, they cannot but from this Spirituality of the promises, infer a necessity of purifying themselves, and being capable at least of innocent Celestial joys; and since that only can be done by vertuous practice here on Earth, the Obligation thereto must needs be very pressing and indispensable. And as the *nature* of the promises directs to this, so does the great transcendent *value* encourage and animate. *Hope* is the grand exciter of industry, and as the object of Hope is more or less *desirable*, so is the endeavour more *intense* or *remiss*; and upon this ground we must conclude the Christian has all reason to be the most indefatigable, seeing his expectations are the noblest and most encouraging. That they are so, we cannot but acknowledge, if we admit of the description which the *spirit* gives: that *spirit* which as he seals us to it, so is himself the earnest of that Inheritance. He in the Sacred *Scriptures* has drawn up a Map of the Countrey which we are to enter: And sure we may say of it as *Caleb* and *Joshua* did of *Canaan*, *Numb.* 14: 7. *the land is an exceeding good land.* For first, if we consider the Negative advantages it has, we shall find there is an absence of all the Ills, destructive or affrightful unto humane nature. *There shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain, Revel.* 21: 4. Here alas, we are infested by all these. *Sorrow* and *Pain*, prey and insult on all the comforts of our lives; leave us not a Gourd, which is not like that of *Jonah*, smitten with these Worms: and then comes *Death*, the grand devourer, and spares not *life* it self. Nay, those little *respites* which we have from these are so embittered by unpleasant expectations and Presages, that we are sad before we are *afflicted*: in *pain* without *disease*, and in *death* in the midst of *life*: and then a State exempted, not only from the Calamities but the Fears of these, may well deserve to be lookt upon with appetite.

BUT Heaven is designed for our reward, as well as rescue, and therefore is *adumbrated* by all those *positive excellencies* which can endear or recommend. It is a *Crown*, and that not of *thorns*, such as our *Saviours* was, and such as the more affected *Diadems* of the world oft prove unto the wearer; *but one of Glory*: nor is that *Crown* nor that *Glory* like our *sublunary* splendors, which suddenly vanish, and leave the possessors to the greater obscurity and contempt; but 'tis *permanent*, such *as fades*

fades not away, 1 *Pet.* 5: 4. or in *S. Pauls* phraſe, *an eternal weight of glory*. But to give you its more comprehenſive Character, *'tis a living with the Lord*, 1 *Theſſ.* 4: 17. Nay, 't is a poſſeſſing even God himſelf. *He ſhall be their God*. *Rev.* 21: 3. and what can he want who poſſeſſes him who is all things? How can he fail of the moſt raviſhing delight, that ſtands before him *in whoſe preſence is the fulneſs of Joy*, and *at whoſe right hand are pleaſures*, and thoſe not ſhort or tranſient, *but for evermore*? So indefeaſable is our eſtate in thoſe *Joys*, that if we do not like mad prodigals ſell it in reverſion, we ſhall when we are once inveſted, be beyond the poſſibility of ill husbandry, not have it in our power to undo our ſelves. Now ſurely theſe are great and precious *promiſes*, ſuch as may well ſuſtain the weight of that inference the *Apoſtle* builds upon them; and engage us to *cleanſe* our ſelves from all *filthineſs* both of *fleſh* and *ſpirit*, and *to perfect holineſs in the fear of God*, 2 *Corint.* 7: 1. for they addreſs to that *Principle* which is confeſſedly Predominant in our *Nature*; ſo that if the love of *Chriſt* cannot, yet the love of our *ſelves* may conſtrain us. How muſt it then affront and baffle the enticements of ſin, when we compare its empty vaniſhing *pleaſures* with thoſe ſolid and durable *joys*? What a foreſtalling will it be of Satans markets, that God bids ſo much fairer for us; offers us that to which his πάντα πάντα σοι δώσω, *all this will I give* (could he make ſuch a whole-ſale) can bear no proportion: and how then ſhall we ever barter it away for thoſe little petty commodities he retails to us; or make any other reply to his profers, than a *get thee behind me Satan*? For alas! can we remember that we are *candidates* for a Kingdom, and yet retain the abject ſpirits of *ſlaves*? Do we expect to reign hereafter, and yet depoſe our ſelves before-hand here? ſuffer every the vileſt luſt to rule over us? Is ſo glorious a prize annext to the victory, and will it not animate the faineſt heart, and feebleſt hands to the combate? What Lions can we fear in the way which this hope is not *Sampſon* enough to encounter? How *light* are our heavieſt, how *momentany* our moſt laſting Afflictions, if balanced with that *eternal weight of Glory*? Are we ſpoil'd of our goods? here is a reſerve of treaſure which no *Thief*, neither the ſlye, nor the avowed, the pilferer, nor the ſequeſtrator can invade. Are we reduced to our *Saviours* deſtitution, not to have *where to lay our head*? *yet we have a building of God*,

God, an house not made with hands eternal in the Heavens. Are we reproch't for the name of *Christ*? that *Ignominy* serves but to advance our future *Glory*, every such *Libel* here, becomes *Panegyrick* there. Nay, are we persecuted to death? that sends us but to take possession of the Crown of Life. Upon such sure grounds does our Christianity set us. While we make good its condition, it pulls out the sting of all that is most deadly: And in a more comprehensive sence, possesses us of the priviledge promised the *Disciples, that nothing should by any means hurt them*, *Mar.* 16. The most adverse changes being but like the ploughing and breaking the ground, in order to a more plentiful harvest. And yet we are not so wholly turned off to that reversion, as to have no supplies for the present; for besides the comfort of so great and certain an expectation in another *life*, we have promises also for *this*. Even of all those internal and spiritual satisfactions which attend the *practice of piety*. The feast of a good Conscience is the true *Christians* daily diet, and sure whatever the rich men of the World think, he only can be said to fare deliciously: nay, he has yet more *supernatural* food, *Manna* rain'd down immediately from Heaven: the *Holy Spirit* sent on purpose to refresh and support him: those Joys which differ rather in degree than kind, from those which are to be his final portion. And that the *Soul* may not be too much incommoded in her house of clay, there is provision made for that also, such necessaries secured to the body, as may keep it in *Tenantable* repair: we have *Christs* express promise for it, that *to those that seek the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, all these things shall be added*: if not that superfluity which may oppress and load, (render the *body* rather the Tomb than Mansion of the *soul*) yet such as may sustain and support us: and sure 'tis easie to decide which is the happier lot. In short, we are sure enough to defray the charge of that voyage, which lands us at *Eternal bliss*: And certainly he must be of a very sluggish or querulous humour, that shall *demur* upon setting out, or demand higher encouragements.

AND as the *nature* and value of the *Promises* render them most proper engagements and incentives to all *vertue*; so if we consider the *manner* of proposing, we shall find them in that respect also highly contributive to the same end. For first,

first, they are clear and expreſs, not wrapt up in dark *ænigmatical* inſinuations, wherein men muſt exerciſe their *ſagacity* as well as their *faith*: but revealed with that plainneſs, that 'tis impoſſible for any who knows but the letter of the *Goſpel* to be ignorant of the Eternal reward it propoſes. And herein the difference belongs to *Chriſtianity* above all other *Religions*, ſome whereof have left men ſo much in the dark, that many *Sects* among them have denied the immortality of the *Soul*; and ſure they were but ſaint encouragements they could propoſe unto that *vertue* which was to periſh with them. What ſhould animate them to the rugged ſevere taſtes of reſtraining appetites, ſubduing paſſions, eradicating habits who diſcerned no rewards for blameleſs *ſouls*? 'Tis true indeed *vertue* is in her ſelf perfectly amiable, though ſhe brought no dowry, but experience ſhews us ſhe has not many *Platonick* lovers: and when ſo few are ambitious to wed Her, when ſhe brings an Eternal inheritance with her, we may eaſily gueſs how little ſhe will be ſought without it. When men once conclude that their *Spirits* ſhall vaniſh into the ſoft Air; the inference is very obvious, *Come on, let us uſe the creatures as in youth*; as we find it elegantly purſued, *Wiſd.* 2. But of thoſe who acknowledged a future being, their preceptions were very miſty and obſcure. The *Heathens* had ſuch confus'd notions of their *Elyſium*, that the *Epithet* of *ſhades* belong'd more properly to the darkneſs than the refreſhment, and was a reward fit for the votaries of thoſe ambiguous *Oracles* they conſulted. And proportionably to the obſcurity of their hopes were the Exerciſes of their *Vertue*: their *piety* was even overwhelmed and conſounded by the multitude of their *Deities*; nay, which is yet ſtranger, their *Gods* themſelves ſeem to have been loſt in their own croud: elſe ſure the *Athenians* never would have inſcrib'd an Altar to the *unknown God*: and indeed their offices were generally ſuch, as if they had been devoted to no other, they having as little diſcerning of their *Worſhip* as of their *God*. 'Twas wrapt up in clouds and darkneſs; had myſterious receſſes to which the common worſhipper had no admittance; ſuch as were to require a veneration only by not being underſtood: and though this muſt needs deprive their ſervices of that ſpirit and quickneſs, which conſtitutes the *vertue* of devotion, yet alas, their *Religion* had more than that negative contrariety to *vertue*. Many of their

Worſhips

worships being nothing but a solemnity of the foulest *vices*: and their *Divinity* taught them to violate *Morality*. A deceit *Satan* could not probably so long have triumpht in, had they had the Gospel notion of Heaven, for sure they could not have suppos'd their *Gods* of such mutable inclinations, as to affect *purity* in their Cohabitants, and *pollution* in their Votaries: or such incongruous dispensers of rewards, as to apportion an impeccable state hereafter to the most flagitious criminals on Earth.

AS to the *Jews* 'tis true, they derived their light from a clearer Fountain, were under the *Oeconomy* of immediate Revelation, and therefore might be suppos'd to have had a freer prospect into that Heaven, from whence their *Law* descended, yet even they were in this, as in many other particulars, under *Moses* his veil, had rather dark *adumbrations*, and those too overwhelmed with the multitude of expres temporal promises. The earthly *Canaan* lay so fair and open to their prospect, as easily intercepted their view of the *Heavenly*; and their *faith* must remove, at least overlook, that *mountain* before it could come to any sight of the *Horizon* and extended *Sky*. Nay, when 'tis remembred that the *Sadducees* a great and learned part of their Doctors denied all future being, we must think the intimations of it were very obscure; it being scarce imaginable, that any considering men should think the *Souls* expir'd with the *Body* upon any other ground, but that they knew not what after-state to assign it. So that though they wanted not *figures* and *shadows*, or as the Apostle calls them, *patterns of Heavenly things*, *Heb.* 9: 23. yet they seem'd not to have been well understood, and the generality of men were not only in their Persons, but their Understandings denied entrance into the *holy of holies*; penetrated not that mystical representation, which was within the Veil: And answerable to this dimness of their perceptions, was the whole *systeme* and *body* of their *Religion*, which rather entertain'd it self in those *external bodily* performances, which affected the *sense*, than in those *Divine* and *Spiritual* raptures, which purified and elevated the *Soul*. 'Tis the *Apostles* affirmation, *Heb.* 9. *that the sacrifices there offered could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience*, and he gives the reason in subjoyning, that they stood only in *meats and drinks*, and *carnal ordinances*. Alas what propriety had all their

their legal purifications towards the cleansing of the mind? That might be in the *Mire* while the body was in the *Laver*: and while the surface of the man was sprinkled with bloud, the heart might be more bestial than those creatures who lent the *ablution*. And indeed if we consider their morality, we shall find that outside formal ceremony had proceeded to infect and poison that also. The outward restraint, the bare forbearance of an actual commission, being by them thought a full compliance with all the Negative precepts: So that we see *Christ* is fain to assert the Internal part of the Obligation, and extend the duty to the thoughts and inclinations. Besides, those acts of *vertue* they perform'd were commonly such as had an Aspect, rather on their temporal well being, than distant and unseen rewards; their Justice, and Charity confin'd to their own *Nation*, directed to the flourishing of their own *Commonwealth*: whereas *Aliens* were devoted to their rapine and despight; so that if they were *vertues*, they were rather *Political* than *Moral*, and indeed while they placed so much of their hopes on *Earth*, lookt on *secular* plenty and tranquillity as their reward, 'twas but consonant they should square their endeavours by that measure, and consider things not simply in their native properties of good or ill, but according to their tendency towards that they esteem'd their *felicity*.

BUT God has provided, as the *Apostle* says, *Heb.* 11: 40. *better things for us*, has not only made a better Covenant with us, but has *establisht it upon better promises*, *Chap.* 8: 6. given us clearer revelations, not only of our *duty*, but our *recompence*; the veil in *Christ* is done away, and we all with open face, *Behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord*, 2 *Cor.* 3: 18. The Gospel puts the evidences of our inheritance into our own hands, seal'd by his explicite and direct promise, who cannot lye: and that not only engag'd by way of *munificence*, but bargain and contract, as the purchase of that *price*, which our *Redeemer* fully paid in our behalf. And sure this is in the *Apostles* phrase *strong consolation*; and if so, it must be forcible enticement likewise, he cannot but run alacriously, who has the prize in his Eye, nor can *S. Paul* use a more pressing argument to his *Corinthians*, *To be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*, than this assurance, *That their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 *Cor.* 15: 58.

AND

AND as this clear proposal of the *promises* is most proper to encourage and inspirit our endeavours, so is the conditionality most efficacious to necessitate and engage them. Had *Heaven* been only promis'd as a largess, and with a blind promiscuous bounty dispens'd without discrimination, how much it might have rais'd our *gratitude*, I know not, but sure it would not have excited our *industry*, which in all instances we find is whetted by interest: and where that is otherwise secur'd, men generally estimate it a part of the benefit that their labour is superseded; and please themselves no less in a lazy bequest, than a full enjoyment. So that indeed it is this circumstance of the *promises* that must give life to all the rest, and make them operative toward the producing of *good life*; for admit the *joys* we expect never so *Divine* and *Spiritual* for their kind, never so great and transcendent for degree, and these also represented to us in the most clear and convincing manner: yet if they be tendered not as objects of our choice, but the certainty of our fate-*felicities* which we are only concerned to enjoy, but not to acquire, they may make us glad, but surely not diligent; it being but a cold inducement to any undertaking to be assur'd 'tis perfectly needless: We have therefore all reason to confess it our greatest advantage towards *vertue*, that God has so linkt our *hopes* and our *duty* together. And indeed when we consider the great disproportion between the one and the other; the infinity of the *reward*, with the despicableness of the *service*: we must resolve that he had no other design in making his *promises* conditional, than to engage us by our interest to that *holiness*, to which he saw our inclinations did not bind us: that it was an artifice of his *love* to ensnare us into two *felicities* by proposing of one, enforce us to take one good in the way to another, *vertue* in passage to *glory*.

AND indeed who would not think this method so invincibly efficacious, as might supersede the necessity of any other, but God who understands our thoughts long before, *Psalm* 139:1. foresaw that notwithstanding this proposal of a *Canaan*, there would be *Reubenites* and *Gadites*, who would set up their rest on this side of *Jordan*; so intent on the commodity of their Cattle, as to be content themselves to be part of the Herd, and *become like the beasts that perish*: That there would

be men of so ignoble, disingenuous tempers, as none of these cords of a man would be able to draw: and therefore there is another part of the *Gospel-Oeconomy* fitted to their capacities; the *threats* and *interminations*, those terrors of the *Lord*, which as Goads may drive those brutish Creatures who will not be attracted: that those who think themselves perfectly unconcern'd in *Davids* question, *who shall ascend unto the hill of the Lord, Psal.* 24:3. may yet startle at *Esays, who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?* Of so formidable a kind are those menaces, as is sufficient to awake the most drowsie stupid *Soul*, and are most apt to operate upon that part of their temper, which evacuated the gentler method: that very sensuality which made them despise *Heaven*, may help to enhanse the dread of *Hell*; the lack of a *drop of water* will be most insupportable to him who fared deliciously every day; those *flames* will be yet more scorching to those bodies, who by studious effeminacies and softness have superadded an artificial tenderness to the natural; nor will the *gnawing of the worm* appear more intolerable to any, than those who here make it their business to tye up its *Jaws*, gag or stupifie that *Conscience* which would now admonish, but will there torment. And when to this is added the *perpetuity* of these *pains*, that *the worm shall never die, the fire never be quencht*, certainly this puts such an edge upon the terror, as may well make it in the *Apostles* phrase, *quick* and *powerful, searching even to the dividing asunder of the Soul and Spirit, the joynts and marrow*, when we are assur'd *that the Axe is thus laid unto the root of the tree, and that every tree that brings not forth good fruit must be hewn down and cast into the fire*, we shall sure be warn'd *to bring forth meet fruits of repentance, and fly from the wrath to come.*

BUT because neither invitations nor threats can avail with those who are any way invincibly impeded to apply them to their benefit: since the most *glorious prize*, the most formidable danger, is insignificant to him, who wants power to run unto the one, or from the other; it has pleased God to inspirit and actuate all his *Evangelical* methods, by a concurrence of *supernatural* strength, makes it not only eligible but possible, I may say easie and pleasant for us to do whatever he commands us: and notwithstanding our natural debility, makes us through *Christ* which strengthens us, *able to do all things*: by his Spirit he prevents, assists, restrains, excites, comforts, convinces, gives grace,

grace, and adds to that the happier largeſs of a will to uſe it, and knowledge to diſcern the want of more: infuſing to the *Soul* an ardent thirſt of greater powers, and readier means of ſervice, which the performance actuates to greater ſtrengths, and yet enflames to new deſires, and more importunate purſuits, whilſt God at once beſtows and crowns his own donations; ſtill giving unto him that has, till that at laſt he give himſelf; and *grace is ſwallowed up in glory*. And to aſſure us of this aid, he has been pleaſed to oblige himſelf; deſcends to the ſolemnity of a *Pact* and *Covenant*; has indented with us, and conſtituted it a principal part of the new and everlaſting *Covenant made with mankind in the bloud of the Son of God, to ſend the comforter, his Holy Spirit, to be with us till the end of the world*, and do all this. So that the Goſpel is at once the aſſigner of our tasks, and the *Magazine* of our ſtrength; ſo much Spirit goes along with that Letter; ſo much internal grace is annexed to its outward adminiſtration, as will to all, who do not reſiſt it, infallibly render it *the power of God to ſalvation*. For 'tis not the ſole priviledge of a *S. Paul*, but the common portion of all *Chriſtians*, *That Gods grace ſhall be ſufficient for them*; which is ſure a more Goſpel-like promiſe, than that it ſhould be too ſtrong for them: ſo violent and irreſiſtible as to commit a rape upon their *Spirits*; ſuch a mighty wind as drives them headlong upon *duty*. Indeed this competency is of all other proportions the moſt *incentive* to induſtry; we ſee in *Temporals*, too little makes men deſperate, and too much careleſs; and certainly 'twould be the ſame in *Spirituals*: but now when we have ſtock enough to ſet up with, and that too of ſo improvable a nature, that is capable of infinite advancement, and yet on the other ſide no leſs capable of total decay alſo, it being given with this expreſs condition, that upon neglect it ſhall be withdrawn: So that our own ſloth may make us *poor*, but nothing elſe can keep us from being abundantly *rich*: What can be imagin'd more animating to diligence and endeavour? And this being the condition wherein our *Chriſtianity* has placed us, added to the former conſiderations, will beyond exception or *ſubterfuge*, evince its perfect *aptitude* and *fitneſs* for the End to which it was aim'd, the *Planting and nouriſhing all true Vertue among men*, the introducing the tree of life into the world again, and ſo forming us a *Paradiſe* even amidſt the briers and thorns of our Exil'd ſtate.

CHAP. II.

The Character of Christian-mens Practice, shewing their multiplied failance both from the rule of that holy profession, and its genuine effect.

AND now who can suspect that a *cause* so rightly dispos'd, should miss of its *effect*? That this so *auspicious Planet* should be counter-influenc'd by any *malevolent Star*? Or that what has so many tenures in us, should be finally disseis'd? For, admit we have not the Piety to be prevail'd upon by the reverence of the *Author*; yet the excellency of its *composition* does so much recommend it to our reason, that we must put off the best part of our *Nature* to evacuate the force of our Religion: nay, supposing us to have done that too, to have struck our selves out of the list of *Rationals*, yet if we keep but the rank of *Animals*, if we have not extinguisht passion and sense, it descends even to them; addresses to our hopes and fears with most importunate solicitations, and convincing motives: So that unless we have the absurd ill luck to have much of the *Stoick*, and nothing of the *Philosopher*, 'twill be impossible to resist its impressions: And sure he that contemplates *this*, will be apt with some confidence to conclude *Christendom* to be the *Goshen* of the World, not only in respect of its *light*, but of its *immunity* from all those *Locusts* and *Caterpillars*, those swarms of mean and sordid Vices which both cover and devour the rest of the *Earth*.

BUT this must be the inference of a mere *contemplative*, a Recluse that converses only with his own meditations: For let him be so much *secular*, as once to look abroad, the most *transient* glance will serve to unravel all his hopeful *speculation*, and shew him that *Christendom* may be as much *Heathen* as *America*: Whereas 'tis usually said, that ill *Manners* produce good Laws, we have reverst the *Aphorism*, and our good *Law* has introduc'd the most corrupt manners. Our holy *faith* which like a foundation should *support* good works, has like a gulf *swallowed* them up. And so universal a depravation is there among

among us, that we have scarce any thing left to distinguish us from the most barbarous people, but a better name and worse vices.

AND here, what terms of wonder or of grief can be significant enough to express or to bewail so strange and so perverse degeneration, that the *light* of the *world* should thus darken it; the *salt* of the *earth* be the means of putrifying and corrupting it? That those who were by God drawn out from the *Heathen* world, should so outvy the *Gentiles* crimes, as if they had forsaken them, only because they were too *innocent*? *This* indeed is one of *Satans* subtilleſt stratagems, to fill Christs *Camp* thus with his *Souldiers*, by whose inteſtine treacheries, he has been more *triumphant* than by all his open assaults and avowed hostilities. What a late *States-man* said (*Prophetically*, if we may judge by the event) of *England*, that *it was a vivacious animal that could never die except it kill'd it self*, is no less true of the *Church*, which has always been *invulnerable* against all *darts*, but what have been taken out of its own *quiver*. Of *this* the *Primitive* times were *pregnant* testimonies, where all the most witty cruelties, the most bloudy persecutions, never made any breach in her: But she stood firmer for all those batteries, and like an Arch'd Building, became more strong and compact, by that weight which was design'd to crush her: But the *Vice* of *Professors* undermines her very foundation, and does as much exceed the *destructiveness* of the most hostile assaults, as inteſtine *treachery* is more ruinous and fatal, than foreign *violence*.

AS long as the *lives* of Christians were the *transcripts* of their doctrine, they rendred it venerable to all, and gave a presumption there was something more than *humane* in it, that could work such signal *effects*, that could so transform *men* as to make the *adulterer* chaste, the *drunkard* temperate, the *covetous* liberal, the *contentious* peaceable. *This*, this was the way to *adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things*, as the Apostle speaks, *Tit.* 2: 10. And then the *rule of contraries* directs us to conclude very distant *effects* from our now so distant *practices*, that our very *religion* should partake of the *infamy* of our lives, and be thought rather a *mystery* of *iniquity* than *godliness*.

THUS is *Christ* wounded in the house of his *friends*, and

has more *reproach* caſt on him by thoſe that *profeſs* his name, than by the loudeſt blaſphemies of thoſe that *oppoſe* it. For when thoſe who have not opportunity to examine our *faith*, ſee the enormouſneſs of our *works*, what ſhould hinder them from meaſuring the *Maſter* by the *Diſciples*? It being ſcarce imaginable that any one *Sect* of men ſhould ſo univerſally run counter to all the rules of their profeſſion: For let any *ſober* Heathen look upon *Chriſtendom*, as it is at *this day* weltring in the bloud, not of *Martyrdom* but *War*, and will it be poſſible for him to think it owns a Goſpel of *Peace*; or that thoſe who ſo perpetually do thoſe outrages they are unwilling to ſuffer, profeſs obedience to the *Royal Law* of *Love thy neighbour as thy ſelf*, *Jam.* 2: 8. Can he *ſee* the *violence* and oppreſſions, the *frauds* and underminings, the buſie *ſcramblings* for little parcels of *Earth*; and yet believe we count our ſelves *ſtrangers* and pilgrims in it, and have laid up our treaſure in *Heaven*? Can he *obſerve* the ſtrange and almoſt univerſal diſtortion of ſpeech, whereby it has loſt its native property of being *interpreter* of the mind, and under *intelligible* words ſo far exhibits the *Babel* confuſion, that no man underſtands anothers meaning? and can he *imagine* we have any ſuch *Precepts*, as *Lye not one to another*, or any ſuch *penalty* upon the infringer, as *excluſion from the new Jeruſalem*? Shall we *hear* our *God* mention'd more frequently and earneſtly in our *imprecations* than our *prayers*, and every part of our crucified *Saviour*, recrucified in our horrid *oaths*; And ſhall he not *think* that his *ſecond* executioners bear him as little reverence as his *firſt*; Or that *he* has given no ſuch *command* as *Swear not at all*? When he diſcerns *ſelf-preſervation* bow'd to as the *Supreme Law*; Can he ever *dream* of another ſo inconſiſtent *obligation* as that of *taking up the croſs*? Or that *ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake* is one of our greateſt *felicities*, when he ſees us run ſo affrighted from it, that no crime, perjury, rebellion, murder, is block enough in our way to ſtop our flight? In *fine*, when he conſiders how much of our buſineſs it is, firſt to excite, and then to cloy the fleſh, to ſpur it on to riots even beyond its own propenſions, that the whole year is but one mad carnival, and we are *voluptuous* not ſo much upon *deſire* or appetite, as by way of *exploit* and bravery: When I ſay he conſiders this, can he poſſibly gueſs our *inſtitution* directs

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us to beat down the body, to *mortifie the flesh with the affections and lusts*, interdicts us all *rioting and drunkenness*, *chambering and wantonness*, and *all provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*? Certainly all rules of discourse will direct him to the quite contrary conclusion. And when he sees a Set of men that have enhans'd the common humane pravity, he will be apt to infer their Principles have taught them the improvement: And upon that supposal he wanted not temptation to his Option that said, *Let my soul be with the Philosophers*.

AND while we thus misrepresent our holy profession to *others*, it will be no wonder if we finally do it to *our selves*, that we forget its *native shape*, and look on her only in the *ugly dress* our selves have put on, and that effect seems already too visible among us: Our lives have so long confuted it, that we triumph over it as a baffled thing; and like *Ammon*, loath it because we have ravisht and defil'd it. Many of us take notice of the better Morals of *Turks* and *Infidels* not in reproach of our selves but our Religion, and because we have so many *Lepers*, think *Abanah* and *Pharphar*, better than all the waters of *Israel*, this is openly in the *mouths* of many, but is so prodigiously *irrational* as well as *unjust*, that one can scarce think it possible to be in their *hearts*, unless they be pursued by the fate of habitual lyars, that at last come to perswade themselves.

CERTAINLY there is no other parallel instance wherein men conclude so perversly: He that shews a man that precipice upon whose brink he stands, that intreats, yea importunes him to retire from the *danger*; nay, bribes him with the greatest rewards to chuse *safety*, has done all that can be expected from a friend, or charitable man: And if after all, the wretched person so advis'd, shall cast himself head long upon ruine; assuredly no *Inquest* would return his murder in any other *form* than that of *Felo de se*. And why then should our Christianity be accus'd of those ills which it would infallibly avert, if our obstinacy would permit it? Indeed the charge is so wild, that it seems rather design'd as an artifice of divertion, a sprout of that first fig-tree which was to hide the nakedness of lapsed *Adam*. Men think it policy to transfer their guilts, and are willing, the *violence* of their lusts should pass for the *impotence* of their Religion. Like irregular *patients* blaming their *Physician* for those ill accidents which they know owing only to their own un-

rulineſs. A pregnant teſtimony of the reproachful nature of ſin, that men are content to betake themſelves to the moſt forlorn ſhifts to avoid the owning it: But the conſciouſneſs is ſo preſſing and intolerable, that with many it drives on to yet higher outrages: 'tis not enough for men to decry their *Chriſtianity* as a feeble *inſignificant* thing, but they load it even with contradictory *imputations*, and that which ſometimes they call *the fooliſhneſs of preaching*, to bring it in ſcorn and contempt, ſhall at another be ſtiled an *Art* and *trick* to bring it into ſuſpicion and hatred, be arraign'd for impoſture and deceit, a project of impoſing upon credulous ſouls, and gaining real advantages to the managers while they feed the ſilly *Proſelyte* with imaginary ones. How groundleſs a calumny this is, as it appears from the ſanctity, and eminent ſimplicity of Chriſtian Religion, which above all things excludes fraud and falſhood; ſo alſo from the deſignments and aims of its firſt promulgators, who as they cannot be ſuppos'd dexterous enough to lay ſuch a ſcene of taking Pageantry; ſo all their viſible acqueſts were ſcourgings and impriſonments, perſecutions and death. If this were the caſe, it would indeed go near to reconcile the before-mentioned contradictory *imputations*, whileſt the impoſing upon credulous ſouls at this dear rate, would be in very deed *the fooliſhneſs of Preaching*, the greateſt madneſs of the World. Men of common reaſon would be aſham'd to uſe ſuch frivolous cavils: but who can without horror hear them from profeſt Chriſtians? That while *Infidels* are modeſt in their reproaches, look upon our Doctrine only as erroneous, *Diſciples* ſhould be bitter and charge it as inſidious and treacherous? Thus does the *Church* experiment the truth of her bleſſed *Lords Predictions*, and finds her *foes are thoſe of her own houſe*: And though ſhe be Chriſts *Dove*, yet is ſubjected to the fate of the *Viper*, and has her bowels torn out by thoſe that ſpring from them.

THESE are the growing conſequences of *reſolute impiety*, he who will not be kept within the bounds of *duty*, ſeldom contents himſelf with that bare violation: He not only *breaks the bonds in ſunder*, but *caſts them away* too; is impatient they ſhould keep a reputation to upbraid him, when he has robb'd them of the power of reſtraining him: And *this* ſure is the bottom of all that deep reaſoning, by which men have learnt to argue

argue themselves and others out of their *Creed*: And though this be indeed the great *Arcanum*, the *Philosophers stone* they aim at; yet they have met with another good experiment by the way: And have, by I know not what *Chymistry*, extracted a reputation out of these most unapt *materials*. He passes for a considering man that disputes principles, and is thought most to own his *reason* that least owns his *faith*: And then 'twill be no wonder if this success animate, and give them not only confidence, but vanity to avow what is thus creditable.

INDEED Satan is too subtile a manager to lose his advantage, and event sadly shews, he has not neglected to improve it, as appears not only by the number of such pretenders unto reason, but even by their advancing to higher degrees. The *voluptuary* who *likes* his portion in this World, and fears that in another, is at first only prompted by his interest to quarrel the *last Articles* of the *Creed*, and so in his own defence denies the *life everlasting*: But when he finds his necessity made a vertue, and himself struck into the repute of a wit; upon that account he doubts not, his fame will encrease with his irreligion, and so proceeds still to unravel farther, till at last he leaves not so much as *I believe in God*: That many have advanc'd so far is too evident, and by some so own'd, that they will not thank his charity, that shall hope better of them.

'TWAS once the *triumph* of infant Christianity, that it silenc'd all the *Heathen Oracles*, and within a while demolish'd even the *Synagogue* too: But alas, its mature age gives us that effect in a most inverted sence, it now has serv'd to suppress even the common notions of a *Deity*, turn'd out the *one* as well as the *many* Gods, and instead of *Polytheists* and *Idolaters* has made *Atheists*, and *that* which Christ tells us was design'd *to perfect and fill up the Law*; has by the strange pravity of its professors at once obliterated both *Law* and *Law-giver* out of mens minds, thereby exemplifying the old Axiom, *Corruptio optimi est pessima*; and the *Saint* as well as the *Angel*, if he desert his innocence, commences Fiend and *Devil*. These are such sad, such direful transmutations as excite not so much wonder, as grief and lamentation; and what Rivers, what Oceans of tears are competent to bewail such unutterable evils?

THE removal of the *Candlestick* is so formidable a *judgement*, that the threatning of it, is us'd by Christ as the most awaking menace to the Seven Churches, *Revel.* 2: 3. but the removing it by our own hands is yet an enhansement of that highest calamity; when men are come to such an insensate obduration, that they court their *Plagues*, become their own *Lictors*, and make that their *choice* which is their extremest *punishment*, they are certainly too secure of that ruine they call for: And may we not fear it may prove *general*, and involve us all? That while so *many* cry out to be deliver'd from their Christianity as their load and pressure, and so *few* express their dissent to that demand, God may in judgement grant it, hearken to those that cry loudest, rescue his Gospel from our profane and impious violations, and give it to others that may bring forth the fruits of it.

NOR is this to be fear'd only from the *explicite* importunities of the blasphemous, for it is interpretatively the vote of many others; whoever give themselves up to the dominion of any lust, do *implicitly* renounce their obedience to Christ, and say *we will not have this man to rule over us.* And when he is thus depos'd from his *regal* and directive power, we have reason to believe he will despise a mere *titular* soveraignity, not suffer the Scepter of his Word to remain as an Empty *Ceremony* among those, who pay it no real obedience: nor be again cloath'd with Purple, crown'd, and saluted King to advance the triumph of his scorn and crucifixion.

NOR will the fawning Professions of the demure hypocrite *avert*, but *accelerate* this Fate: He that makes the *Golden Scepter* in Christs hand, a *rod of iron* in his own, that thinks his *Saintship* licenses him to all the severe censures, and the yet severer (because more effective) *oppressions* of others, he is certainly to be lookt on not only as a Rebel, but an Usurper too, and is of all others the highest provoker. He that *tramples* under foot the Son of God, does not so much violate him, as he that *pretends* to erect him a Throne upon bloud and rapine, on perjury and sacriledge: Nor does he that accounts the Bloud of the *Covenant* an *unholy* thing so much profane it, as he that uses it as a *Varnish* to paint over his foulest lusts. The Apostle has long since told us, *there is no concord between Christ and Belial*, and can we think he will be patient

patient thus to be made subservient to his enemy? Or suffer his *Ark* to be set for the *support*, which should be the *confusion* of *Dagon*? Do we find him so severely upbraid the hypocrisie of the *Jews*, that *stole*, *murdered*, *committed adultery*, *and swore falsly*, *and yet came and stood before him in his House*, *Jerem.* 7: 9. and shall we hope he will connive at it in Christians? Was it intolerable profanation in them to *account* his house a den of robbers, and shall we be permitted to *make* it so? They are sent to *Shiloh* to read their own destiny, and surely we are likely to find ours there too; to be deprived of those advantages which we have so unworthily us'd: Nor can we expect, that though God cause the natural *Sun to rise still as well on the evil as the good*, yet that the *Sun of righteousness* shall continue to shine on those who will only bask themselves in his Rays, grow *Æthiops* from his *neighbourhood*; but will not work by his *light*.

WHEN all this is consider'd, what a sad abode does it make? When the *blasphemies* of the Profane, the *sensualities* of the Voluptuous, and the *mockeries* of the Hypocrite, send, as it were, daily Challenges to Heaven, we cannot but look it should at last *overcome* its long-suffering, *awake* God to vindicate the honour of his Name, and not suffer it any longer to be thus prostituted and polluted: that when he sees his light serve only to aid us the more subtilly to contrive our deeds of darkness, he should withdraw it, smite us with blindness like the *Sodomites*, whom he finds in such impure pursuits: And were that *blindness* such as our Saviour speaks of, *John* 9: 41. that inferr'd the *no sin*, 'twere a desirable infliction, but alas, it has none of that property: That which is designed for the punishment can never be the extenuation of our guilt; but as in Hell there is an unhappy Separation of *effects*, the scorching of the *flame* without the light, and the blackness of *night* without the rest: So in this nearest approach to it, this Portal to those Chambers of death, there is the ignorance without the excuse, the darkness divested of its native quality of hiding: And when we are entred among *Heathens* here, we must yet expect the sadder portion of *Apostatiz'd* Christians hereafter.

AND O that this *consideration* might at last have its proper *operation*, rouse and awake us timely to prevent those evils

which it will be impossible to cure. That by bringing forth some more *genuine* and kindly fruits, we may avert that *dismal* sentence, *Cut it down, why cumbreth it the ground.* That men would generally lay to heart both the *sin* and infamy of being *promoters of publick ruine*; and quench that *fire* with their tears which their sins have kindled, that the fasting and prayers, the sighs and groans of the *Primitive* Christians may supplant the profane luxuries, the carnal Jollities of the *Modern.* And that Sackcloth and ashes may become the *universal mode*, the only *fashionable* dress among us. *This* both Reason and Religion suggest as matter of our most importunate wishes; would God our hopes were but half as pregnant.

BUT the *less appearance* there is of this universal reformation, the *more jealously* ought every single person to look on himself, lest he be one that obstructs it: For so he does who stays till it be a *fashion*, but neglects to contribute his part to the making it so. Men are willing to discourage themselves from attempts of this kind, and with an unseasonable modesty can reflect what a nothing one man is to so many millions, when alas, all that vast Empire Vice has got in the world, is founded in the pravity of single persons, and would certainly be ruin'd by their reformation. The more reasonable Collection would be that he that considers himself but as *one*, should not suffer himself to grow into *less*; to fall from that *Unit* to a *Cypher*, by permitting sloth or cowardize to enfeeble and emasculate him: but on the contrary should recollect his spirits, actuate all his strength, and therefore be sure to do his utmost, because that *utmost* is but a *little.*

AND to this certainly there want not encouragements. We see in common affairs the wonders that industry and resolution are able to effect, and a *single* courage being exerted has often without *Romance*, overcome *giantly* difficulties. 'Tis a great prejudice is cast upon vertue by the pusillanimity of those that *like*, but dare not *abet* her. When most men commit all impieties daringly, and openly, and those few that do mourn for it, do it but in secret, the example of the *one* is contagious, but the *other* has no means to diffuse it self. Would men stoutly own *duty*, and not like *Peter*, *follow Christ afar off*, they might yet hope to make a party and *gain ground* in the World. And how noble an attempt were this, thus to encounter

Satan

Satan in his highest triumph, and recover a *lost field*? And methinks those who have any *warmth* of Piety glowing within, may easily thus improve it into a *flame*, ὅπως ἐπιδῶσιν ἐν τῇ πίστει ἀρετήν, *add to their faith virtue*, as that signifies *courage*: and then readily would succeed that train of Christian excellencies reckon'd up by *St. Peter*, 2 *Epist.* 1:5. *knowledge*, *temperance*, *patience*, *godliness*, and superstruct on these, as it there follows, *brotherly kindness*, and the most comprehensive *charity*. We should be not only devout towards *God*, but zealous towards *Men*, endeavouring by all prudent means to recover them out of those snares of the Devil, whereby they are taken captive. And since among all those snares there is none more entangling, than the creditableness and repute of customary vices, to set themselves especially against that overgrown covering and ornament; those *Locks* wherein its great, its *Sampson-like strength* lies: And strive to render it as condemn'd as it is base: and to this purpose nothing is so apt, as the exalting its competitor, fetching vertue out of the Dungeon, that darkness and obscurity wherein it has long lain forgotten, and by making it illustriously visible in their *own* practice, put it into the possibility of attracting *others*. Indeed there only it appears in its true splendour, they are but dead colours the sublimest speculation can put on it, he that would draw it to the life, must imprint it upon his own. And thus every pious person may, nay ought, to be a *Noah*, a preacher of righteousness: And if it be his fortune to have as imperswasible an Auditory, if he cannot avert the *deluge*, it will yet be the providing himself an *Ark*, the delivering, yea advancing his *own soul*, if he cannot benefit *other mens*.

NAY, this being a *Noah* may qualifie him to be a *Moses* too, give him such an *interest* with Heaven, that he may be fit to stand in the gap to be an *intercessor* and Mediator for a provoking people. And God knows never any generation more needed that *office*: nor any part of this more than our sinful Nation, which having long been in the *furnace*, is indeed now come out, but so unpurified, that we have all reason to expect a return, and that not upon the former frustrated design of *refining*; but upon that more infallible and fatal one of *consuming* us. This is so dreadful, but withal so just

an expectation, that if there be any *Jacobs* among us; any, *who can wrestle and prevail with God*, there never was so pressing need of their intercession. O let all that are thus fitted for it vigorously undertake this pious work; let no *Moses*'s hands ever wax heavy, but be always held up in a devout importunity; let them transcribe that holy Oratory, which he so often effectually used, plead to God his own cause, with a *What wilt thou do to thy great Name?* And when there is nothing in us that can pretend to any thing but vengeance, ransack Gods *bosom*, rifle his *bowels* for arguments of *compassion*, repeat to him his own *titles*, that he is *long-suffering and of great mercy*, *forgiving iniquity*, *transgression and sin*, *Numb.* 14: 18. And by these solicite, yea, conjure him to pity. And how great an ardency is required to this intercession? What *strong* cries must they be that shall drown so *loud* a clamour of impieties? And how does it reproach the slightness of our sleepy heartless addresses? Can we hope to bind Gods hands with Withs and Straws? To arrest his vengeance with such faint and feeble assaults? And when *nature* and *danger* suggest to Heathen *Nineveh*, not *only* to cry, but cry *mightily* to God, shall the superaddition of our Religion damp ours into a *whisper*, a soft *unaudible* sound? A storm will teach the profane Mariner to pray in earnest, and alas! we have not wanted that discipline. 'Tis not long since we might have said with those, *Acts* 27. *No small tempest has long lain on us, neither Sun nor Stars in many days*, nay in many *years*, *appearing*, nothing but black and dismal portents of a final *wreck* to a poor *weather-beaten Church*, and then sure 'twas time to be importunate, to learn so much of instruction from the waves that tossed us, as to make our prayers keep pace with them, in swift uninterrupted succession, in loud and not to be resisted violence. That we did so *then* I dare not affirm, but sure I am the necessity of it is not *yet* out dated; for though the Sky however black with clouds carry no thunder in it; though the impetuous winds that blow from every quarter, should not break out in tempest, and bring shipwrack to us; yet we too fully exemplifie the truth of the *Prophets* Axiome, *That the wicked are like the troubled Sea, that cannot rest*: we have *within* us a principle of ruine, which can operate though nothing from *without* excite it. A tempest is not always necessary

ceſſary to ſink a Ship, one treacherous leak may do it in the greateſt calm, and what ſecurity can there then be to our torn Veſſel, whoſe rents our continued diviſions do ſtill keep open. Indeed our *preſervation* muſt be as our *reſtauration* was, the work of Omnipotence; thither therefore let us addreſs with *S. Peters* pathetick Prayer, *Save, Lord, or we periſh.* O that all who are concern'd in the grant of that Petition, would qualifie themſelves to preſent it; lift up ſuch pure hands, *that God who hears not ſinners*, *Joh.* 9. may yet hear them, afford a gracious ear, and give an anſwer of *Peace.*

CHAP. III.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Inconſideration.

THE laſt Section having defeated all the promiſing hopes of the former, by ſhewing us how ſadly we have fruſtrated all the deſigns and engagements of our profeſſion, enervated all thoſe apt and powerful methods, and how perfectly contrary our *practices* are to our *rules*, mere curioſity would more prompt us to enquire what are the hidden *cauſes* of thoſe ſo ſtrange *effects*; what unhappy propriety there is in the *ſoil*, that after ſo much *culture* and husbandry it ſhould produce nothing but *wild* Grapes; and by what arts and wiles Satan has not only evaded, but even retorted thoſe blows which were aim'd at him. But as in *diſeaſes* the *pains* and languiſhing are obvious to the groſſeſt ſenſe, but the *ſprings* and originals of them moſt frequently lye deep, and are ſo complicated and interwoven, that they require much art to ſearch and to diſtinguiſh them: nay, do often mock the moſt ſubtil inquiſitor, and ſend him back with mere conjectures and uncertain gueſſes: ſo in this *Epidemick* Spiritual diſtemper, the *malady* is notorious and viſible, but the *cauſes* of it not ſo eaſily determin'd, yet that not ſo much from the darkneſs as the number of them; ſo many do pretend, and that with very good colour, to this unhappy, this monſtrous birth, that a *Solomon* himſelf muſt have made the propoſal

of

of dividing it, as not being able to have aſſign'd it entire to any one Mother.

INDEED ſo many are the concurrents towards it, that it would far exceed the limits of this little Tract, but to point at them: I ſhall not therefore undertake any ſuch *exact* enumeration, but ſhall only take notice of thoſe which either for the generality or degree of their efficacy appear the moſt *eminent*.

AND firſt the great and ſtupid *Inconſideration* which moſt men have concerning their Religion, may well paſs for a main cauſe of its fruſtration. *Chriſtianity* may make *Archimedes* his *challenge*; give it but where it may ſet its foot; allow but a ſober advertence to its propoſals, and it will move the whole *world*: it comes with moſt invincible and controuling arguments, but ſtill they are arguments, and thoſe muſt firſt obtain *attention*, before they can force *aſſent*; they will moſt infallibly weigh down the *ſcales*, though the whole world were the *counter-balance*; but then that muſt preſuppoſe their being put into thoſe Scales; their being entertain'd with ſo much of deliberation, as may try and examine their weight. In a word, they addreſs to us as men, that is, *creatures* endued by God with *rational* Souls and diſcurſive faculties; but if we will ſuppreſs theſe, and ſet up only the *brute* to give audience, we muſt not expect *Balaams* prodigy ſhould be every day repeated, that the *beaſt* ſhould be wiſer than the *rider*, and conſequently cannot wonder if the Succeſs vary with the Auditors.

AND 'tis to be fear'd, that this is the ſtate of moſt of us, that all the convincing *Logick*, that *demonſtration of the Spirit*, as *S. Paul* calls it, and all the perſwaſive *Rhetorick* of the Goſpel, find us ſo ſtupid and unconcern'd, that they can make no impreſſion: all the *avenues* are ſo blockt up, that they can find no way of approaching us. We are like the *Indian* Serpents *Philoſtratus* mentions, proof againſt all charms, but ſuch as with their glittering ſplendor aſſault our Eyes: nothing moves us but what courts our Senſes, and what is not *groſs enough* to be ſeen, we think *too nice* to be conſider'd. The form and name of Chriſtianity men find ready to their hands, and it coſts them no labour to put it on: but ſhould they be interrogated of the import and ſignificancy of it, I fear many would

would be at a loſs what to anſwer: Men call themſelves *Chriſtians* as they do *French* or *Engliſh*, only becauſe they were born within ſuch a Territory, take up their *Religion* as a part of their *fate*, the temper of their *Climate*, the entail of their *Anceſtors*, or any thing moſt remote from their choice; the profeſſion of it deſcends to them by way of inheritance, and like young careleſs Heirs, they never are at the charge to ſurvey it, to inform themſelves either of the Iſſues or Revenues of it; what burdens it lays, or what advantages it promiſes. Every man ſees they are vaſt multitudes that have entered the *Baptiſmal* vow, and I fear no ſmall numbers of them, that weigh it as little when they ſhould *perform* it, as they did when they *made* it. Have no other notion of *Baptiſm*, but as a *cuſtom* of the place, or a *time* of feſtivity: conſider no farther ſignificancy in theſe ſpiritual bands, than they do in the Swadling-cloaths of their infancy, and can give no better account why they took on them *Chriſts livery*, than why they wear ſuch *garments* as the *common faſhion* of their Country preſcribes them.

THIS is in many the effect of groſs ignorance, that really know nothing that borders upon Religion: and where that is the *principle*, we cannot think it ſtrange to ſee their *practices* proportionable; this returns them into the ſtate of *Heatheniſm*, and while they walk in that darkneſs, it is no wonder if they often fall: the only matter of admiration is, that there ſhould be any ſuch darkneſs among us; that *the glorious light*, as *St. Paul* terms it, *of the Goſpel of Chriſt*, ſhould not long ere this have diſpell'd it out of our *Horizon*, and certainly, that it has not, muſt be owing to ſome very great guilt, ſo that concerning ſuch perſons the Diſciples queſtion, *Joh.* 9. is very pertinent, *Who did ſin, this man or his Parents?* Where men are ſo ignorant, it muſt neceſſarily infer their *Parents* negligence in infuſing, or their *own* ſtubborn perverſeneſs in reſiſting inſtruction: but 'tis more probable to conclude the former, ſince if Children were early inſtituted, knowledge would inſenſibly inſinuate it ſelf, before their years had arm'd them with obſtinacy enough to make head againſt it: but when by the Parents remiſſeneſs the proper Seeds-time is loſt, the ſoil grows ſtiff and untractable; the *labour* of learning averts their Childhood, and the *ſhame* of it their Manhood,

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and ſo they grow old in their ignorance, are ready to *leave* this world before they come to *know* any thing of that which is to ſucceed it. This is a *common*, but certainly, a moſt *deplorable* caſe; and as it loudly accuſes thoſe Parents, who thus wretchedly hazard their Childrens greateſt concernments, ſo certainly it reflects not very laudably upon thoſe, who by ſlighting that excellent Order of *Confirmation* in this Church, have beſides all other advantages of it, robb'd them of that happy reſerve, which the care of their *Spiritual* Parent had provided to repair the negligence of their *Natural*; but guilt has a miſerable kind of infinity, and leſſens not by being communicated; and therefore though theſe unknowing perſons may with juſtice enough *accuſe* others, yet can they never the more *abſolve* themſelves. Indeed they cannot tax others omiſſions towards them, without a tacit reproach of their own: for if it were a fault in the *Parent*, to let their infancy want thoſe neceſſary infuſions, 'tis ſurely ſo in *themſelves*, to let their riper years continue in that deſtitution. And ſure 'tis not probable there could be a more irrational motive to the *former*, than that which prevails with the *later*, to wit, the fear of ſhame, which certainly much more properly belongs to him that lies ſtupidly under his want, than he that induſtriouſly ſets to cure it: ſo that while they go thus prepoſterouſly to *avert* reproach, they invite it; nay, and do beſides betray one of their moſt important ſecrets, diſcover themſelves more ſolicitous about *appearances* than *realities*; to be *thought* knowing than to *be* ſo. A ſtrange kind of *ſpeculative* Hypocriſie, which yet leads to all the *practical* profaneneſs incident to thoſe, *who live without God in the world.*

BUT would God the uncatechiz'd were the only perſons we had to complain of in this matter: There is another ſort as *ignorant*, who have not that plea; who by a wretchleſs *Inconſideration*, have made a ſhift to *unlearn* what they had once been *taught*. That this is naturally very poſſible no man can queſtion, that obſerves how *deſuetude* will rob a man of any Science; or other habit. But in this caſe there is yet a farther concurrent towards it; Chriſts parable tells us of *Fowls that devoured the Seed*, which himſelf interprets to be the *wicked one*, which catcheth away the word ſown in mens hearts: When that ſpiritual ſeed lies looſe and ſcatter'd upon the ſurface,

ſurface, and is not by deep and ſerious meditation harrowed, as it were, into the ground, it offers it ſelf a ready prey to the devourer, and God knows the *event* is too ready to atteſt the *truth* of the obſervation: For we do not ſee *many* whoſe childhoods have wanted nothing of Chriſtian nurture, that have had all advantages to the making them *wiſe unto ſalvation*, yet ſuffer their manhood to wear out and obliterate all thoſe *rudiments* of their youth; and that not only out of their *practice*, but even out of their *memory* too: this (would we be patient to have the experiment made) would, I doubt not, be found true in divers, and they would appear leſs able to approve themſelves, not only to the *Confeſſor*, but even to the *Catechiſt* in their *adult age*, than they were in their *Minority*; as having ſcarce ever thought of the principles of their religion, ſince they conn'd them to avoid correction; and then 'tis no wonder if they paſs into the ſame *forgetfulneſs* with other the occurrences of that *ſlippery* age.

BUT if with ſome the *memory* have been ſo invincibly *faithful*, as not to have reſign'd its *depoſitum*; if it do happen obſtinately to retain thoſe early impreſſions which were made on it; yet alas! that alone will be of little avail: 'tis true, that is the ſtore-houſe, and 'tis good to have that well repleniſht; but if its *plenty* be only within it ſelf, uncommunicated; if the *granary*, though never ſo full, be ſeal'd up, it gives no ſecurity againſt a *famine*: a mans remembrance of his *Creed* may tell him there is a *God*, and that he is Almighty; but if his reaſon be ſo much aſleep, as not to infer from thence the neceſſity of reverencing and obeying him who is all-powerful to revenge our contempts, he may repeat the *Article* every day, and yet never the leſs *Atheiſtically*. In like manner he may go on to the Birth, Death, and Reſurrection of Chriſt; but if he weigh not the obligations to gratitude and duty, which devolve on him from thence, he may remember his *Birth*, and yet never be *regenerate*: his *Death*, and yet not *die to ſin*; and his *Reſurrection*, and yet *lie rotting* in his own *corruption*, and not riſe with him to *newneſs of life*. So he may proceed to his *coming to judge the quick and the dead*, but if he reflect not on his own particular concernment in it, if he conſider not that *for every the ſecreteſt thing*, Eccl. 11. *God will bring him*, as well as others, *to judgement*; he may talk of

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Dooms-day as men do of ſuch *Aſſizes* as they have no Trial at, but it will never ſet him a trembling or give him the providence to anticipate his ſentence; ſo judge himſelf here, that he may not be judged of the Lord. And ſo proportionably in all the parts of our Chriſtian Faith: he that does not extract from them their proper and juſt inferences, ſhall never feel their efficacy. He has indeed in that excellent *Syſteme*, a moſt infallible *Catholicon*, againſt all his ſpiritual Maladies; but 'tis a Medicine, not a Charm; to be taken, not laid by him; and if he fail in *application*, he will as certainly miſs of the *cure*: And this gives us one too clear a reaſon, why *ſo many*, in the moſt fatal ſence, *are ſick and weak among us, and ſaln aſleep*, are firſt *lethargick*, and then ſtark *dead in treſpaſſes and ſins*. Men do not by ſober conſideration ſuck out the vertue which would heal them: they look on the Creed as *Chriſts badge*, and ſo long as they bear that, they think none muſt queſtion their *Chriſtianity*: whereas 'tis indeed more properly his Military *Symbolum*, or recognition of the Cauſe, and General they fight for; an engaging them to all the obedience, fidelity and conſtancy of reſolute ſouldiers: and to this purpoſe it is that we *ſtand up* at the recital of the Creed, as owning our Baptiſmal promiſe, to *fight* manfully under our Saviours *Banner* againſt *Sin*, the *World*, and the *Devil*; and if we do not thus, 'tis not material what profeſſions we make, we are the ſame deſertors whether we *ſtay* in our own Camp, or *run* over to the enemies; *throw away* our Arms, or *not uſe* them; *renounce* our Chriſtian faith, or not *improve* it. Sloth is as miſchievous in war as treachery or cowardize, and he that keeps his *ſword* in the *ſheath*, is as unformidable an enemy, as he that brings *none* into the *field*.

AND how many ſuch inſignificant *combatants* are there in the Chriſtian Camp, that only lend their *Names* to fill up the *Muſter-roll*, but never dream of going upon *ſervice*? 'Tis certain there are as many ſuch, as there are careleſs unconſidering Profeſſors: and theſe, 'tis to be fear'd, make ſo great a number, that were the Church put to eſtimate her *forces*, and examine what effectively her *ſtrength* is, ſhe would find the deceit of *falſe muſters* as great among the *Spiritual* as the *Civil* Souldiery. It is indeed a moſt amazing thing to ſee, that that which is the one great and important intereſt

tereſt of all men, ſhould of all other things meet with the leaſt regard. If we make a propoſal of worldly profit, though incumber'd with many difficulties, and liable to many uncertainties, we ſhall not only have an attentive hearing, but active care and diligent purſuit of the deſign; it will be driven to the laſt glimpſe of hope; and if the firſt attempt miſcarry, the next occaſion is laid hold of; but here, where the *prize* is ſo rich, the *conditions* ſo eaſie, the *acqueſt* ſo certain, yet (as if theſe were deterring, averting qualities) we cannot be got to take the matter into our deliberation. Alas, what ſtupid folly has poſſeſt men? And by what *meaſures* do they make their *eſtimates*? How are their precious Souls become ſo vile in their eyes, that they are the only part of them, which they think below their regard? In an *Epidemick* diſeaſe every man looks out for *Antidote* or Medicine for his own peculiar, and does not acquieſce in that ſilly confidence that he ſhall do as well as other men: yet in this greater danger, that is their avowed comfort, and keeps them as chearful as if they had the moſt ſolid grounds of ſecurity. Alas, can numbers *out-face* damnation, or do men hope that by going in troops to Hell they ſhall *maſter* the native inhabitants, *ſubdue* thoſe legions of tormentors, and become *conquerers* inſtead of *ſufferers*? This is ſure too wild an imagination for any to entertain, yet what more ſober one can any pretend, in favour of ſo ſtupendous an improvidence?

BUT 'twill be much more ſeaſonable to *reform* than *Apologize* or *Rhetoricate*; and therefore 'twill import thoſe men, who like the inhabitants of *Laiſh*, dwell *careleſs*, quiet, and ſecure, to look about them; to enter into *ſerious* conſultation how they may avert that ruine which waits upon ſuch a ſupine temper; not to ſuffer themſelves to periſh in the midſt of ſuch poſſibilities, nay ſolicitations to be ſaved: but at laſt afford an audience to that Embaſſie which is ſent them from Heaven. Ponder well thoſe *eaſie* terms of reconciliation which are propos'd: the *ineſtimable advantages* conſequent to the embracing that amity; and the as *ineſtimable detriment* of refuſing it: In a word, not to pleaſe themſelves with the *empty title*, but to penetrate the *full purport* and ſignificancy of their Chriſtianity, and when they have done

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this ſoberly and attentively; having removed this firſt and moſt general obſtruction to piety, they will find themſelves aſſaulted by ſuch force of *reaſon*, that they muſt either be very ill *Logicians*, or very good *Chriſtians*.

CHAP. IV.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Partial Conſideration.

NEXT to the *ſtupid* and merely vegetable ſtate of total incogitancy, we may rank that *partial* and piece-meal conſideration, by which Chriſtianity is mutilated and deform'd, depriv'd of all its force to attract and ſubdue mens hearts: for as in *artificial* Movements, there is ſuch a dependence of one part upon another, that the ſubſtracting of any one deſtroys the whole frame: ſo in this *ſpiritual* Machin deſign'd to raiſe our dull mortality to Heaven, the divine wiſdom of its maker has combin'd its ſeveral parts, that he who ſevers, ruines; he that applies it not in its united ſtrength, will find no aid from its unjoynted ſcattered particles. *S. Paul* tells us, 1 *Cor.* 12. that in the natural body, the making it all Eye, or Hand, the reducing the many members to one, is deſtructive to its being: (if they were all one member where were the body, *verſe* 20) and we in reaſon muſt expect the ſame event will follow here. If we advance one part of our Chriſtian Faith to the annihilation of the reſt, 'tis impoſſible that ſhould ſupply the place of the whole; but the more that member is ſwoln above its native ſize, the more *unweildy*, not the more *ſtrong* it grows; and loſes that active vigor, which is receiv'd by a ſocial communication with the other parts.

'TIS Gods charge againſt the *Prieſts*, *Mal.* 2. that *they have been partial in the Law*, נשאים פנים lifters up of faces in it; preferr'd *ſome* more agreeable parts, and diſcountenanc'd *others*; were not *only* judges of the Law, but *unjuſt* judges too. And I fear the endictment may now run more generally againſt the people alſo; that they have been partial in the

the Gospel; culled and chosen out those softer and more gentle dictates which should less grate and disturb them: like well the *Oil* that makes them have a chearful countenance, but are not so forward to deal with the *Wine* which should search and cleanse their sores. We make all our addresses to the *promises*, hug and caress them, and in the interim, let the *commands* stand by neglected. A *divinity* indeed fitly apportion'd to the devotion of *these times*, which loves to make an *offering to God of that which costs them nothing*, and yields a preference to that way of *worship* which assures Salvation *best cheap*, and at the *easiest terms*; but would men consider, they would find, that the *commands* are the supreme and most eminent part of the *Evangelical Covenant*, the *promises* come but as *handmaids* and attendants: an honourable retinue to invite the more respectful entertainment, and it should be remembred that of this *sort* are the *threatnings* too; and therefore they have surely an equal right to our regard, especially when many of them have the accession of Gods *Oath*, to bind and strengthen their *performance*. And what a scandalous and absurd partiality is this, that when the precepts come with this solemnity, the more to command our reverence, we single out this one part of the Train and pay our homage unto it; lay hold on the *Promises*, not those that speak *damnation* to impenitence, but the other half of them which give *assurances* of favour. And like the *Benjamites* to the daughters of *Shiloh*, run away with them, possess our selves of these by rape, in spight of all the incapacities we lye under; though God has sworn, that no disobedient provoker shall enter into his rest.

THAT this is really the case of many is more than probable; for by what other artifice is it possible for them to reconcile their large hopes, with their no purifying; their confident expectations of Heaven, with their greedy rapacious pursuits of Earth; their secure dependence on the Bloud of their *Saviour*, with their remorseless effusions of that of their *Brethren*? Did they consider the inseparable *connexion* between the Precepts and the Promises, 'twere hard for them to be so *wicked*, but impossible to be so *sanguine*. Did the *unclean* person believe that none but *the pure in heart shall see God*, if he could be so much *Swine*, as still to chuse the *mire*; yet sure

ſure he could not expect to be rapt from thence into Heaven. Did the *Drunkard* conſider the ſentence of the Apoſtle *excluding all ſuch from the Kingdom of God*, 1 *Cor.* 6: 10. if he can be content ſo ſadly to over-buy this ſin; as to pay that Kingdom for his ſhot; yet certainly even he cannot be ſot enough to expect the poſſeſſion of what he has ſo ſold, or hope that from one of his drunken *trances*, he ſhall *awake* to *glory*. Did the *Covetous* extortioner obſerve that he is involv'd in the ſame ſentence, remember that ſuch Violents *ſhall take*, not *heaven*, but *hell*, *by force*; if the terrors of the Lord could not have force enough to melt his bowels, to unclutch his griping hand, or diſſeize him of his prey: yet ſure it muſt diſcourage him from graſping of Heaven too, from hoping to defraud *God* as he has done *men*, and ſtriking himſelf into an eſtate in the land of the living: and in like manner all other hoping ſinners if they would ruine, yet muſt ceaſe from flattering themſelves, muſt chuſe *damnation* bare-fac'd, and not fancy that their poſting on in the broad way ſhall ever bring them to *life*. And ſure this diſcovery of their eſtate, were a very good ſtep to the curing it: For though 'tis poſſible ſome few may be of ſo *ſturdy* an impiety, as to chuſe their *ſin* with all its conſequents; yet ſure all ſinners are not of that ſtrong complexion, and therefore *Satan* is put to his wiles and artifices, is fain to *hoodwink* thoſe that are apt to *ſtart*; and diſguiſes the danger when he ſees the true appearance of it will terrifie and avert. This was his *old* policy with our *firſt* parent; he dazles their eyes with the *glorious*, but *abuſive* propoſal of becoming like *Gods*, that they might not diſcern how near they were approaching to become like *Devils*: and this under the pretence of confidence and friendſhip, diſcovering, as it were, a ſecret to them, that God envied them that promotion, which his greater kindneſs was ſolicitous to procure for them. And as if the ruine of mankind, in *Maſſa*, had been too ſlight a *Trophy* for that one ſtratagem, he repeats it again to the individuals, perſwades men that the path of obedience which God has chalkt out is ſtrait, and narrow, rugged and incumbred; that there is a ſhorter cut, an eaſier paſſage to life: that they may be led into *Canaan* a nearer way, ſtep into it immediately from the fleſh-pots of *Egypt*, and ſcape the tedious weary March in the Wilderneſs: never ſo much as call

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at Mount *Sinai*, or be affrighted with the *Thunders of the Law*. In a word, they need not *work out their Salvation*, but be they never so slothful *they may inherit the Promises*, *Heb.* 6: 12. this is his one grand *Conclusion*, though he has several *mediums* to infer it by: wherewith as with so many *tools* and Engines he furnishes men for the *filing* or breaking of that sacred link between duty and reward; and of these he has great variety fitted to the hands, and skill of those that manage them. I shall not undertake to ransack his *workhouse*, or give an inventory of his *Utensils*, but shall rather in general beseech all those, who have made this unhappy separation, to remember from whose *Forge* they took their *Instruments*; and then consider whether his officiousness in supplying them, can argue any thing but that 'tis his work they are about. Can any think that he, whose eternal pastime it will be to torment men, can really be solicitous of their ease; that he would chuse out for them the *pleasantest paths*, were it not that he knows they lead to the *chambers of death*? When *Christ* whose sole business it was to save mens souls, has prescribed us a *course* which shall assuredly conduct us unto *happiness*, what can it be but phrenzie to resort to *Abaddon*, the destroyer, for an easier *method*, or expect more *gentleness* and compassion from the *roaring Lyon* than from the *Lamb of God*?

NAY indeed this is not only to attribute to him more tenderness, but fidelity too: to believe him in opposition to all the express affirmations of God; and when he who is truth it self has told us, that *except we repent we shall all perish*, *Luke* 13: 6. and that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, *Heb.* 12: 14. to disbelieve this only upon his bare credit, who was a lyar from the beginning: This indeed is a prodigious composition of blasphemy and folly; a strange contumely to *God*, but fatal treachery to our *selves*: For alas! Satan entertains us all this while but with a trick of *Legerdemain*, and as *Juglers* make us believe we have cut the *string*, which yet presently after they shew us *whole*; so he perswades us he has thus sever'd the *Condition* from the *Promises*, when to our grief it will finally appear their union was *inviolable*. 'Tis not all our vain confidence that can reverse the immutable divine Law; we may, 'tis true, delude our selves,

keep up our ſpirits high; in a ſecure jollity *eat and drink, and riſe up to play*, and ſo not only loyter, but revel out our *day*, till the *night* overtake us *wherein no man can work*; but we ſhall never be able to propagate the deceit, where only it could avail us; to perſwade God to pay the *hire* to thoſe that have been no labourers, or give the *prize* to any who have not run to obtain it. Let every man therefore in a juſt tenderneſs to his own Soul, ſtrictly examine his hopes, try, not how *high* they towr, but how *deep* they are founded; whether on the *ſand* or on the *rock*; the flattering deluſions of Satan, and the dreams of his own Phancy, or on the Promiſes of God: for though all pretend to build on the latter, yet God knows, a multitude of fooliſh *Architects* there are, which miſtake their ground, take that for aſſurance that is not: And this truly is a thing deſerves to be ſoberly conſider'd; they that moſt greedily catch at the Promiſes, do often embrace a *cloud* inſtead of the *Deity* which they ſo eagerly graſp, and thereby think to enjoy. But *faithful* obedience, and not *inſolent* hopes commend us unto God. The Goſpel indeed deſcribes to us great and ineſtimable *felicities*, but he that can think this gives him *Title* to them, may as well pretend to the whole *World*, becauſe he has the *Map* of it in his houſe: for though it mentions them to all, yet it promiſes them to none but the obdient. And thoſe *Iſraelites* which fled from the ſight of *Goliah*, 1 *Sam.* 17. 25. might as reaſonably challenge the reward propos'd to the Victor, as men can pretend to enter into life without keeping the Commandments: this then is the one *Criterion*, by which a man may judge of his hopes; if they be but proportionable to his obedience, they are then regular, and ſuch as will not make him aſham'd, but prove incentives and engagements to every good work. Let him obey as much as he can, and then he need not deny himſelf the comfort of hoping as much as he can too. But if his *hopes* exceed this meaſure, and ſquare themſelves only by his *wiſhes*; if he look for Heaven, not becauſe he is *qualified* for it; but becauſe he wants or *covets* it; this is rather to dream than hope, and ſuch *whimſies* will as ſoon inveſt the beggar in *wealth*, the deſam'd in *honour*, the ſick in *health*, or any man in any thing he has but a mind to, as compaſs *Heaven* for the bold *Fiduciary*.

IT

IT is indeed like those *Lunacies* wherein mens fancies adopt them Heirs to those Kingdoms they know nothing more of, than the names; and sure the Analogy holds as well in the *cure* as the *disease*: let these *Patients* a while be kept dark, taken from the dazling contemplations of their imaginary priviledges, to the sad reflection on their sins: and as God expostulates with *Israel*, Ezek. 33: 26. *Ye stand upon the sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every man his neighbours wife, and shall ye possess the land?* So let them recite to themselves the Catalogues of their impieties, and then ask their own hearts, whether these be the qualifications of those that shall rest in Gods holy Hill? Whether these marks of the *Beast* can ever rank them among the followers of the *Lamb*? And let these Considerations be prest home, reiterated so often, till by repeated strokes they have made good the other part of the method, made their Souls bleed, and by that Spiritual *Phlebotomy*, temper'd their swelling veins, allayed the over-sanguineſs of their constitution: and then there remains but one thing more to complete the course, and that is bringing them into the *Work-house*, setting them really to *work out* their *salvation with fear and trembling*, which they had so near played away by confidence and presumption: And when they have done thus, they have verified their hopes, and then may safely reassume them: They are return'd again with advantage to their first point, and are that in *soberness* and *reality*, which they then were only in *fiction* and *imagination*.

AND now would God men would once be content to be thus disabus'd; that they would not be so in love with deceit, as in the Prophets phrase, *Jer.* 8: 5. to *hold it fast*: that they would not chuse *Chimæras* and *phantastick* Images before *real* and *substantial* Felicities; and prefer that hope which will be sure to *skipwrack* them, before that which will be an *Anchor of the Soul, sure and stedfast*, *Heb.* 6: 19. and if this so reasonable a proposal may be embrac'd; if the World should, as the *Spaniard* said, but *rise wise one morning*, what a deal of dead merchandize would Satan have upon his hands? Many of those they call the comfortable Doctrines would want vent, which are now the Staple commodity of his Kingdom. What those are, 'tis no part of my design to examine, it will be every mans particular concern to do it for himself; which he

may do by this one teſt; whether they more animate men to *hope* well, than to *live* well? Whether they bring *Alexanders* ſword to cut aſunder the *Gordian* knot, to ſever between the promiſe and the condition? Or the ſword of the *Spirit* to ſubdue all to the obedience of Chriſt? If the former, we may expect the fruits of ſuch will be all that licentiouſneſs which *S. Paul* deſcribes, as *the works of the fleſh*, *Gal.* 5: 19. it being not to be imagin'd, that the *precepts* of the Goſpel, which they divide from the *promiſes* only, that they might fall off, ſhall then be *voluntarily* taken up in mere good nature and heroick Generoſity; that thoſe who are ſo induſtrious to avoid the neceſſity of *Chriſtian practice*, will make it their *free-will-offering*. If there ſhould happen to be ſome few of ſo ingenuous a gratitude; yet 'tis certain, that is not our common mould; few men will be better than they think their intereſt bids them be, and therefore ſuch principles are dangerous Seminaries of *Libertiniſm*: and 'tis mens very important concernment not to admit them. Let not then their chearful *aſpect* recommend them to our *embraces*; men may be kill'd with too much *Cordial*; that which ſeems to refreſh the *Spirits* may enflame the *Bloud*, and though *cold poiſons* have gotten the fame of being the moſt *malignant*, yet there are *hot* that are as infallibly *mortiferous*. Let it be our care in oppoſition to both, to keep our ſelves in that moderate, equal temper, which belongs to *healthy* Souls: and ſince that is the vitalleſt heat which is gotten by exerciſe, ſet to our buſineſs, employ our ſelves diligently in all thoſe duties the Goſpel exacts, and then we ſhall not want ſuch an hope as may warn our hearts, keep us in a chearful expectation, till we come to the glorious fruition of that *Eternal Salvation which God has promiſed to all them, and only them that obey him.* And till we do thus, till we conſider as well what we are to *do*, as what we are to *receive*; there will be no hope of reſtoring Chriſtianity to its native vigour: we ſhall make it evaporate all its ſtrength in *unſignificant hopes*, convert it into Air, to bear up our Bubbles, inſtead of that *firm ground*, whereon we ſhould build *vertue* here, and *glory* hereafter.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from Carnal Consideration.

AFTER the disadvantages of *Partial* Consideration, may fairly be subjoyn'd the ills of that advertency, which is impregnated by *sensuality* and sloth, and makes pretence unto right *reason*, but tends indeed as much as any thing to the frustrating the design, and enfeebling the force of our Religion: such close *reserves* of deceit and malice have men to their own Souls, that when they quit *one* strong hold of Satans, 'tis only to retreat to *another*. When they are not so *brisk* and Aerial, as lightly to skip over those precepts that lye in their way, they are so *gross* and unwary as to fall at them; if they may not pass for Straws and Chaffe, such as every blast of vain confidence may blow away, they shall then be improved into Heaps and Mountains, become stones of stumbling and rocks of offence; and when they are call'd upon to Consider them, they do it in so perverse a manner, as if they meant to revenge themselves on that unwelcome importunity: their *consideration* is worse than *neglect*. They look into them insidiously, not as *Disciples*, but as *Spies*; not to weigh the obligingness, but to quarrel the unreasonableness or difficulty of the injunctions, not to direct their *practice*, but excuse their *prevarications*.

FROM this unsincere kind of inspection it is, that the *Precepts* have got so formidable appearance with many, that they have fallen under such heavy prejudices, as to resolve them intolerable yokes, insuperable tasks: that this *Canaan* is a land that eats up its inhabitants, wherein there is so little of *enjoyment*, that it scarce affords a *being*. Men count a *life* under such restraints, so joyless and uneasie, that it differs from *death* only, by being more *passive*. They think *Zeal* like a *Hectick Feaver*, in a slow, but certainly fatal *Fire*, exhausts and consumes the *Spirits*. Mortification and *self-denial* macerate and decay the *body*; and *liberality* dissipates and wastes the *estate*: And with these Apparitions, which them-

ſelves have conjur'd up, men run frighted from duty, reſolve the burden is inſupportable, or at leaſt grievous to be born, and therefore as our Saviour ſays of the *Phariſees*, *will not touch it*, no not ſo much as *with one of their fingers*, *Matth.* 23:4. never make any attempt to try what indeed they are; but take their meaſures from their own, or perhaps other mens preeudicate opinions, and thence take out an *Authentick Record* and *Patent* for ſloth, fancy the journey too long for them, and therefore ſit ſtill; firſt call Chriſts Commandments *grievous*, and then improve that ſlander into a *manumiſſion*; abſolve themſelves from obeying them. And unleſs they may have the Gate to life cut wider, made capacious enough to receive them with all their luſts about them; will never eſſay to enter it.

BUT if the *Prince of darkneſs* have enacted it a *Law*, that difficulty ſhall paſs for excuſe, yet if *real* uneaſineſs may be admitted to be as deterring as *imaginary* ones, his own decree will retort the moſt ruinouſly on himſelf, and men may plead it as their diſcharge from all thoſe baſe drudgeries, thoſe tyrannous impoſitions wherewith he loads them. The *Drunkard* may experimentally tell him the *pain* of an aking head, of an overcharged ſtomach, the *ruine* of a waſted Eſtate, and claim a diſpenſation from purſuing that uneaſie and coſtly ſin. The *Wanton* may bring his macerated body like the *Levites* Concubine, *Judg.* 19. and urge it as an evidence how cruel a Maſter he ſerves; and from thence emancipate and free himſelf: And indeed every ſin carries in it ſo much of viſible toil, or ſecret ſmart, as would by force of this rule ſupplant and undermine it ſelf; and ſure *Satan* would never have arm'd men with ſo dangerous a *weapon*, had he not diſcern'd them ſo in love with *ſlavery*, as ſecures him it ſhould never be us'd againſt him; for if it ſhould, nothing could give him a more mortal wound, more irrecoverably ſhake his Kingdom. Nor would only that *infernal Region* feel the force of that *deſtructive* principle; it would make as ſtrange confuſions in *ſecular Regiments*.

FOR if ſuch *pleas* as theſe may be admitted, they will eaſily cancel all *Humane*, as well as *Divine* Laws, and every *malefactor* will transfer his *guilt* on the ſeverity of the *Legiſlator*: The *Thief* may ſay it is too great a difficulty for him to reſiſt the temptation of an apt *opportunity*; a rich prize, that his fingers

fingers are too ſlippery even for himſelf, and he cannot reſtrain them, and then quarrel the ſtrictneſs of the *Law*, which has rais'd ſo high a fence about mens properties, that he who climbs it muſt endanger his *neck*. The *Rebel* may complain that the bands of *Allegiance* are too ſtrait, the yoke ſits too cloſe, galls and frets his tender fleſh, exclaim loudly at the *Tyranny* of thoſe that laid it on, and in that out-cry drown the noiſe of his own *Treaſon*. And ſo every other tranſgreſſor may accuſe the rule, as acceſſary to his ſwervings, till at laſt the *Laws* be made the only *Criminals*.

I LEAVE every man to judge both of the equity and conſequences of ſuch diſcourſings in *Civil* matters, and ſhall only deſire he will apply them to *Spiritual* alſo, where certainly they are neither more juſt, nor leſs ruinous: and whilſt ſuch abſurd *pretences* as theſe paſs current, no wonder if *Chriſtianity* languiſh and grow impotent, want ſtrength to impreſs it ſelf on the lives of its *profeſſors*. The moſt infallible Receipt can work no cure on him, who upon the ſuſpicion of its bitterneſs, refuſes to taſte it. The moſt excellent *Laws* muſt loſe their regulating *power*, where the *execution* of them is obſtructed; and we may as reaſonably look for the efficacy of *Chriſtianity* among thoſe who never heard the *name*, as among thoſe, who owning the *name*, do yet diſclaim its *precepts*; and ſo all thoſe interpretatively do, who by accuſing them of too great rigour, avert both themſelves and others from their Obedience.

THAT the Charge is ſcandalouſly unjuſt will appear to any, who ſhall allow themſelves the juſt means of information; but alas! the way of *Proceſs* men take in this affair is ſo inequitable as certainly preſages the partiality of the *ſentence*: What perſon ever was there ſo innocent, ſo excellent, who if arraign'd at the *Tribunal* of his mortal enemy, could be acquitted? *Chriſt* himſelf ſhall be pronounced a *Blaſphemer*, when a *Caiaphas* is to examine him: and no wonder if his *precepts* find proportionable dealing; if they be decried as *impoſſible*, *tyrannical*, perhaps *ridiculous* too, where the ſcanning of them is referred to thoſe, whoſe intereſt it is to defame them. Men enthrone their *luſts*, ſet them up in the *judgement-ſeat*, and none can expect they ſhall paſs ſuch a *ſentence*, as ſhall include their own *condemnation*: if

they own the *commandment* to be *holy*, *juſt* and *good*, they muſt tacitly accuſe *themſelves* to be *impure*, *unjuſt* and *wicked*, and as ſuch to be conſign'd to wrath and judgement.

HERE then we have the true account how Chriſts *commands*, which are in themſelves ſo *far* from grievous, have gotten ſo unkind a *reputation* among us; this is ſo direct a courſe for it, that we may ceaſe our *wonder*, though not our *grief* too ſee it; for we behold them ſtand to the award of thoſe with whom they have a profeſt enmity: the *Gaol* gives ſentence on the Bench; the *Bar* arraigns the judgement-ſeat. Certainly when that Law which is *Spiritual* is ſubmitted to the arbitrement of groſs *carnality*, the Law of Liberty is taxed and rated by thoſe worſt *bondmen who are ſold under ſin*; 'tis impoſſible to find any fairer treatment. That which comes on purpoſe to dethrone ſin, diſpoſſeſs it of the Empire it has uſurpt, will certainly be entertain'd with the ſame *exclamation* the Devils us'd to Chriſt, *Why art thou come to torment us?* But as if this *general Antipathy* were not enough to aſcertain the rejection of Chriſts command; as if the *National* feud, as I may call is, between Heaven and Hell were not thought irreconcileable enough, men offer yet harder meaſure, call in the aid of *perſonal* quarrels, and when the precepts come to be conſider'd, refer each of them ſingle to that *particular* Vice to which it has the directeſt *contrariety*.

THUS when Chriſts command of *meekneſs and forgiveneſs*, *of loving enemies*, *and turning the cheek*, *bearing the Croſs*, or *ſelf-denial* calls for audience; they conſult (as *Rehoboam* did with his young hot-ſpurs) with their anger and malice, their rancor and revenge, and they ſoon give their *Verdict*; that to be meek is to be *ſervile*, a temper fit only for the abject. That to forgive enemies is a principle of *cowardiſe* that would emaſculate the world; to love them a piece of *Spaniel like fawning*; but to turn the Cheek; not only to hazard, but invite new injuries by owning them as benefits; paying bleſſing for curſes, kindneſs and good-turns for hatred, is ſuch a *ridiculous patience*, as muſt expoſe to the inſolence of many, and the ſcorn and deriſion of all men. And then the *reſolution* is ready, they will be no ſuch *fools* for Chriſts ſake. So when the precept of humility and lowlineſs comes to be conſider'd, their

their *Pride* is deputed to hear its plea, and then though it bring the authority of Christs *example* as well as his *command*, it will be judg'd invalid: *Christ* indeed *took upon him the form of a Servant*, and to that, humility was a proportionable *Adjunct*: but what is that to them whose aspiring humour abhors subjection, 'tis not calculated for their *Meridian*, they are of another manner of Spirit, and would not have it embased by the admission of so mean a quality: and though Christ hath put *poverty of Spirit* among his Beatitudes, they resolve he shall not ensnare them with that *artifice*; they will not take his *measures* of felicity, or resign that pleasure they have in valuing themselves, for any thing he proposes in exchange. In like manner the precepts of temperance, sobriety and chastity, are not permitted to the Judgement of sober *reason*, nay, nor of mere natural *desire*; but to *appetites* vitiated and inflam'd by radicated *habits*; and then the *Glutton* thinks, to eat moderately, is to be starv'd; and will as soon *put a knife*, Prov. 23. *to his throat*, in the vulgar sence of cutting it, as in *Solomons* notion of restraining his excess. Thus the *Drunkard* with his false thirsts looks on sobriety as a kind of Hell, where he shall want *a drop to cool his tongue*, and thinks the abandoning his debaucht jollities is an implicite adieu to all the comforts of life. The *Unclean* person when his bloud is high, scoffs at Chastity as a religious kind of impotence, and only so far considers the *precept* of *pulling out the Eye*, as to infer that it were as easie litterally to part with it, as to restrain its lustful range; not look at all, as not look to lust. And proportionably it fares with Charity and bounty, which though our *Saviour* recommend, *Mammon* arraigns of robbery, and stigmatizes as a *Thief* that picks the Purse, and rifles Coffers. But amidst all these, *the taking up the Cross*, *suffering for righteousness sake*, and *the doctrine of self-denial*, fall under the heaviest prejudice. These are oppos'd not by some one single vice, but the confederate arms of all; even those, whose interests are flatly opposite, do here unite: *Herod* and *Pilate*, *Sadducees* and *Pharisees* accord against Christ, and all are freely suffer'd, nay invited to exhibit their *complaints* against these *Mandates*. *Covetousness* cries out that this is the most ruinous prodigality, cast away an estate in a lump, and lays all open to forfeiture and confisca-

tion: and *Prodigality* takes it as ill to be foreſtall'd, and have nothing left for it to diſſipate. *Prophaneneſs* avows a contempt of it as a folly, and moſt open madneſs to part with *real* pleaſure for an *empty* name, or profit for that *Bankrupt thing* call'd Conſcience: and *Hypocriſie* has a more ſecret hatred of it, as its detector; that which will bring it to a Teſt which it cannot paſs. *Malice* puts in a *Caveat*, that this is to gratifie enemies, and loſe the ſatisfactions of revenge: and *Self Love* puts in another, that it is to deſtroy ones ſelf. In ſhort, every *limb* of the body of ſin diſcharges a *blow* at this innocent and Divine Sanction; as if they meant it ſhould exemplifie its own doctrine by aſſuming that paſſive temper it recommends.

BUT alas, who can expect any more *upright* verdicts from ſuch *packt*, ſuch *corrupt* Juries, and why may not Chriſt be permitted to claim the common *benefit* of our *Laws*, to make his challenge and exceptions againſt this ſo incompetent *impanel*? 'Tis the counſel of the Wiſe man, not to adviſe in common affairs with thoſe whoſe tempers may be ſuppos'd to biaſs them. *Conſult not*, ſays he, *with a coward in matters of War, nor with a ſluggard of much buſineſs*, *Eccl.* 37: 11. and ſure if they be ill *Counſellors*, they muſt be worſe *Judges*: but why then do we ſet pride to judge of humility, luſt of purity, covetouſneſs of liberality; and make our *vices* the *arbitrators* of thoſe *Laws* which ſhould reſtrain them? This is ſuch a groſs *injuſtice* as common *humanity* abhors; we deal by other meaſures with men, the moſt notorious and flagitious criminals, and reſerve this way of proceſs for thoſe things only wherein our God may be concern'd. 'Tis a ſevere exprobration of a prophane people, *Malach.* 1: 8. where God accuſes them for treating *him* with leſs reverence than they would do a *mortal* Prince. *Offer it* now *to thy Prince*: but alas! we ſhall force him to deſcend far lower in his expoſtulation, ſo far we are from paying him the *duty* and regard belonging to a *Prince*, that we yield him not the rights of *common* men; force him to ſtand to thoſe meaſures which we think too inequitable to preſs upon a murderer, a thief, or rebel at the Bar.

BUT this waving of common rules is a plain confeſſion that we need more indulgence, than thoſe will allow: When mens *luſts* thus uſurp the *Tribunal*, and judge in their own cauſe,

cauſe, 'tis a palpaple diſcovery they dare not remit themſelves to any more equal determination. And indeed in this point of their intereſt, they paſs a right judgement: for 'tis certain were the *caſe* referr'd to any competent Judge, indeed to *any* but *themſelves*, they would inevitably be caſt; and ſure 'tis high time that ſome ſhould aſſiſt *oppreſt vertue* in its appeal; find it out ſome *Court of equity* where its plea may be heard: and we need not travel *far* for that purpoſe, every man may do it in his own *breaſts*, where in his little *Common-wealth* he ſhall find a *Court* of Gods erecting: let him but draw the Cauſe *thither*, diſcuſs the matter in his own conſcience; and he will ſoon find the former unrighteous ſentences revers'd: let him but ſeriouſly reflect on his *violations* of thoſe ſacred Precepts of Chriſt; and obſerve what a *ſting* and ſecret remorſe every ſuch *breach* leaves within him: and that will be a competent atteſtation of the *equity* and obligingneſs of thoſe Mandates: for from whence elſe can the regret ariſe? Thoſe things that are either impoſſible in their nature, or unconcerning to us cannot beget it. No man accuſes himſelf for not flying in the *air*, or walking upon the *water*; nor owns himſelf *guilty* in the non-obſervance of any *Laws*, but ſuch as have *power* to oblige him: and therefore theſe cloſs pangs and checks of *Conſcience* are an irrefragable evidence, that men do *inwardly* aſſent to the juſtice and authority of thoſe divine *rules*, which their *actions*, yea often their *words* too, do moſt oppugn.

BUT over-and above the throes and afterpains of conſcience, when ſin is brought forth, the ſelf-accuſation of the *Criminal*, when none beſide controuls, nay many flatter and commend; I ſay beyond this ſecondary and reflext *Apologie* for Chriſts Law owed to the foregoing prevarication of it; there is an early and immediate *verdict* paſt in its behalf, in the eſteem and liking which thoſe documents command, where e're they paſs: creating an aſſent and veneration not only when obey'd, but from profeſt deſpiſers; who cannot chuſe but think well of that vertue they deſert, and the neceſſity of their affairs compel them to ſpeak ill of. An event *viſible* in the condemnation of our Saviour, where the *Judge* who *gave ſentence* againſt him, at the ſame moment *waſht his hands*, and openly profeſt, *he found no fault in him.*

AND indeed this very reflection on the *Author* of theſe precepts, if well conſider'd, would ſuperſede all other arguments. The *Mandates* of the Goſpel on this one ſcore, that they are Chriſts, are certainly both *pure* in themſelves, and *poſſible* to us: and ſo moſt worthy not only of all *obedience*, but all *love* too. He who is our *Lord* upon both the titles of *Creation* and *Redemption*, may certainly with all juſtice impoſe what laws he pleaſes on us. Yet he, who laid down his life for the redemption of the tranſgreſſions which were under the firſt Teſtament, cannot be imagin'd ſo inconſiderate of our frailty which himſelf had ſmarted for, as to introduce another of equal rigour, or be ſo prodigal of his bloud, as to pour it out for thoſe who by a new ſet of impoſſible commands ſhould infallibly reforfeit themſelves again: and if this cannot be ſuppos'd, the contrary may be concluded, that he hath ſo far condeſcended to our imbecillity, as not to *preſcribe* us any thing which he either finds or makes us not able to *perform*. 'Tis true indeed, his *Laws* are above the reach of our corrupt and debaſed *nature*, and they were unfit to be his, were they not ſo: but when he by his grace offers to elevate and refine this nature, bring it up to the pitch and purity of thoſe Laws, this is a far greater mercy than if he had deſcended to our corruption; ſo he might have contaminated himſelf, given laws unworthy of him: But alas! what advantage would it be to us, to have the *Blaſphemy* mention'd, *Pſal.* 50. ſo verified, to have our *God* in this ſence, *ſuch a one as our ſelves?* But by this other *Method* he purifies, and exalts us; puts us in a capacity of being *like unto him*, in which is ſumm'd up at once, all both *virtue* and *felicity*.

AND on this glorious *end*, every particular *command* of his has a direct aſpect, every one of them tending to *re-impreſs* on us ſome part of that divine *image* which was raz'd out by the *firſt ſin*; and this, one would think enough to recommend them to our higheſt value. Certainly, if *Conſcience* may be *Judge*, it will be ſo: there being in this caſe no middle between *devout* reverence, and *horrid* blaſphemy; for he that deſpiſes ſuch an *aſſimilation*, muſt neceſſarily alſo deſpiſe *him* who is ſo *reſembled*: he who thinks meekneſs, purity, humility, *&c. unamiable qualities*, can have little eſteem

esteem for him, in whom they are *transcendently eminent*, but will take the Prophet at his word, and say, *There is no form nor comeliness in him*, *Esai.* 53. But this sure can never be the *Verdict* of Conscience; he that can thus *pronounce*, must be suppos'd to have suppress and *silenc'd* that. It being one of the most indelible *notions* there, that *all that is in God, is sublimely excellent*. But because 'tis indeed too possible that Conscience may be put under such an undue restraint, suffer the violence of a *Prisoner*, when it should sustain the place of a *Judge*: because many men dare not permit their consciences to speak, lest they should say more than they are willing to hear. And lastly, since these persons make their appeal to reason, pretend the aids, and boast in the advantages of that, it may not be amiss to bring the *Cause* unto that *Bar*, whose *Empire* and *Authority* none must disclaim that own the *Style*, and least of all those *Scepticks* in Religion with whom we have to do; who will allow of no conviction but from it.

AND *God*, who, as the Apostle says, *leaves not himself without witness*, has so temper'd and dispos'd his *Precepts* as to qualifie them to pass even this Test also, they being not the *contradictions* but *improvements* of natural Reason: and so most apt to recommend themselves to all that is *Man*, not *Brute* about us. Indeed they have the very same aim and design with that. It has ever been the grand business of *sober reason* first to discover, and then to attain that *one supreme good*, which would give rest and felicity to the soul; in this inquisition have the *Philosophers* and greatest Masters of Reason, laid out their most serious studies and deepest contemplations; and in their indefatigable pursuits seem joyntly to sigh out *Davids* question, *Who will shew us any good?* And now the *Gospel* comes a solution of this so important a Query, *brings these glad tidings of joy* to all people, and that not only in its *credenda*, by informing us what that *good* is; but in its *agenda* too, by tracing us out the *way* to it; beating us a path which will certainly lead us to that *summum bonum* which our very *nature* implicitly gasps after: and sure *reason* can never jar with *this*, which comes thus as a happy *Auxiliary* to succour its impotence: as an infallible *guide* to conduct its steps: and as a glorious *light* to give it a clear view of what it before blindly groped after. 'Tis a certain Indication of

madneſs, to *tear* and miſchief thoſe things that would be uſeful to us, to curſe and revile a friend, or fly in the face of thoſe whoſe charity brings them to our aid; and therefore 'tis moſt evident that *reaſon* muſt firſt ceaſe to be reaſon, and commence *phrenzy*, before 'tis poſſible it can ſet it ſelf in defiance of thoſe Laws of Chriſt, which are thus accommodated to its greateſt Intereſts.

AND as the accord is thus obſervable in the *ultimate*, ſo is it in the *intermediate* deſign alſo. *Reaſon* had by its twilight diſcern'd, that that Soveraign *bliſs* it aim'd at, would never be hit by an unſteady hand; by him who was perpetually toſſed and agitated by his turbulent inordinate appetites. Therefore young men, yet in the heat and ferment of their bloud, were ſolemnly proſcrib'd and baniſht from the Schools and Lectures of *Philoſophy*; therefore luſtrations and *Catharticks* of the mind were ſought for, and all endeavour us'd to calm and regulate the *fury*, if not extirpate (which ſome contended for) the very *being* of the Paſſions: that ſo a preparation might be made, *firſt* for the knowledge, and *then* the attainment of felicity: Now the *Goſpel precepts* have viſibly the ſame *end* and purpoſe: every one of them expreſly ſingling out ſome irregular affection to combate and ſubdue: ſo that *right reaſon* and *they* are evidently of a *Sect* and Party, inſomuch that ſeveral of the ancienteſt Fathers of the Church attributed the excellent documents of *Heathen Philoſophers* to the *Divine* λόγος, the reaſon and eſſential *Word of God* which after was *incarnate* upon earth; and brought auxiliary ſtrengths of *grace*, to aid the weakneſſes of *nature*. The bleſſed *Jeſus* whoſe bare word *checkt the Sea* in its higheſt fury, and by that Miracle atteſted his Divinity; as much exerts himſelf in ſilencing the louder Tempeſts, and calming the inteſtine ſtorms within our breaſts. And certainly *reaſon* will not quarrel to have been thus reliev'd, it being the *property* only of proud *folly* to chuſe rather to *loſe* a victory, than *owe* it to the aid of an Allie.

FROM this general view, it were eaſie to deſcend to obſerve the exact concurrence of particulars. God loves *a reaſonable ſervice*, and has ſo temper'd his commands, that every Act of obedience we perform may be ſo qualified, and gain unto its votaries the *Elogium* promis'd in the Law of *Moſes*, Deut. 4: 9. *Surely this people is a wiſe and underſtanding People.* And firſt that

that the command of *Meekneſs* is a moſt *rational* Precept, can never be doubted by any, who remember but the common definition of *Anger*, that it is *Furor brevis*, and ſure 'tis very reaſonable not to be mad; and he that has obſerv'd the unmanly tranſportations of that wild paſſion, how that the firſt violence it offers is to the man within him, will certainly think it the intereſt, not only of his *Religion*, but common prudence, and right *Reaſon* to ſuppreſs it. And the like is to be ſaid of the more ſolemn *Phrenzy* of deep malice and deliberate *Revenge*, where the fury wants the allay of being tranſient and ſhort-liv'd, is embodied into Complexion and temper, and grows inveterate into Nature. *Anger* indeed is a *fire*, and he that touches it though but lightly, will find it *ſcorch* him: but the *Malicious* lays himſelf as it were to *roaſt* at it; prolongs and ſpins out his own *Torment*, as if he meant to anticipate his *puniſhment* in his very crime, and commence his *Hell* here, *in unquenchable fire*. Truly no *ſin* does more repreſent that ſtate of horror to which it tends; it gives a man not only a certain *title*, but an ample *earneſt*, pays him part in hand of thoſe diſmal wages. This was ſo well underſtood even by the *Heathens*, that we ſee the *Poets* knew not how more *emphatically* to deſcribe the future *torment* of an envious and malicious perſon, than by the repreſentation of his *ſin*. *Prometheus's Vultur* begins her quarry in this life; every malignant *thought*, every ſpightful *wiſh* preys upon his *heart* that harbours it: every revengeful project puts him in the pangs of labour till it be brought forth; and when it is, it commonly rebounds ſo miſchievouſly upon the Parent, that the birth ſeems like that of *Agrippina*, when ſhe bare *Nero* that murder'd her. And ſurely not only *reaſon*, but common *ſenſe* will ſay this is a ſtate to be deteſted, and conſequently muſt give its ſuffrage to thoſe Laws of Meekneſs and Charity, which are the only expedients to prevent it. *Peace* is deſervedly reckon'd among the *higheſt bleſſings* of Communities, and ſure it has a proportionable value, in every ſingle member of thoſe greater bodies, it being that which is indiſpenſibly requiſite to the enjoying of any other good. A *War* we know interrupts at once all the *profits* and *pleaſures* of a Nation: and this hoſtile *temper* in a mans mind does the very ſame, and like *Choler* in the ſtomach, takes off all *guſt* of the moſt delightful things, and ſo becomes a *Hell* in the *pœna damni*,

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as well as that of *Senſe*: and then how abſurd an impatience is it, for men to think every the ſlighteſt injury from another inſupportable, and yet heap ſuch heavy preſſures upon themſelves: like froward *Children* roar out for the leaſt touch from *another* hand, yet knock and batter *themſelves* without complaint: as if their only contention were, that they may be the ſole *Authors* of their own *calamity*. And that which adds yet more, if it be poſſible to add to ſo vaſt a folly, is, that *revenge* never repairs any *Injury*: If I have been reproacht or defam'd, 'tis not the wounding of my enemies body that will heal my fame; I may by that means help to ſpread the Libel by inviteing many to enquire the cauſe of our quarrel: but that is no *Medium* to prove him a ſlanderer, the world being too well acquainted with the nature of revenge to imagine it an argument of his innocency that acts it: ſo far it is from being ſuch, that it gives a moſt violent preſumption of guilt, according to that notable *obſervation* of the *Hiſtorian*, *Convitia ſpreta exoleſcunt, ſi in aſſare agnita videntur*. In like manner ſuppoſe me hurt in my body, *reraliation* brings no *balm* to my ſores: my pains abate not by his having the like or greater; nor would my Wounds *feſter the leſs* though his ſhould *gangrene*. So if I am indammag'd in my goods, I may contrive to repay him that ill turn, and yet not recover my own loſs; and generally the ſpightful ſpoils that are made, are of that nature. 'Tis true, the Law may in ſome caſes repair the injur'd perſon; but then that is owing to the Juſtice of the *Law*, not to the malice of the *Plaintiff*: for he that ſues upon the naked intuition of recovering his *right*, without any reſpect of *revenge* on the invader, has as fully the benefit of the *Law* (and indeed none can innocently have it otherwiſe) and then to what ſerves the vindicative humour, what increment or advantage can the ſuperaddition of his revenge bring him in? 'Tis ſure in all theſe inſtances it often does the quite contrary; plunges him in farther troubles and dangers, and when all this is conſider'd, we may certainly pronounce *Chriſts* precept of Meekneſs partakes as well of the *Serpent* as the *Dove*, is as well *prudent* as *innocent*: nor is this *Concluſion* at all ſhaken by that *Objection* which men make from the danger of inviting more injuries and affronts by this tameneſs: for firſt ſuppoſe there were truth in it; that hazard could not

not balance the many certain mischiefs which have been evinc'd inseparably to follow the contrary temper: and it were certainly less penal to endure multitudes of light and transient *Abuses*, than those far more uneasie ways of *redress*, which mens revenges suggest to them: and then 'twill be perfectly reasonable, *of* these *two evils to chuse the less*. As for the greater and more important violations, there are legal ways which may prove redress in some cases, or prevention in others: He that is slandered or impoverished, may take a course to clear his *Innocence*, or recover his *goods*: he that is hurt or maim'd, though he is uncapable of reparations, yet the law provides for his future security, by awarding such *penalties*, as may discourage the *offender* from repeating the *violence*: And to these aids, a man may resort with these *Proviso's*, *first*, that he abstract from all deign of *revenge*; and *secondly*, that the matter be of *weight*; and certainly he that by these *legal means* cannot be secur'd, can be much less so by any *private attempt* of his own: For he that despiseth the coercive *power* of Laws, will much more contemn the *enmity* of a single person. The only difficulty in this case is, when a State is in such a confusion that there is no lawful Judicature to appeal to; but that implies so many sadder miseries, than the want of such a redress amounts to, that every man may patiently enough cast this into the heap of greater evils; and not consider that one pressure, when so much weightier calamity exacts his grief: But sure the *suspension of Law* in this particular does no more *qualifie* a private person to be his own *Revenger*, than it invests him in any other part of *Authority*; and he may with as good right place himself on the Bench, and become a *Judge* in *other* mens causes, as thus become both *Judge* and *Executioner* in his own.

BUT in the *last* place, the ground of this objection seems weak and sandy; for that meekness is not the way to expose a man, generally speaking, to more suffering: 'tis possible indeed through the barbarity of some few insulting *cowards*, who love to vapour *good cheap*, that they may trample on those who give least resistance; but this is not the common bent of *humane Nature*, (which ought to be the measure in this case) we find men usually exasperated by *opposition*, who are calm'd and appeas'd by *gentleness*. *Anger* is not of the nature

nature of that monſtrous *Fire* the *Hiſtorian* tells us of, which *nothing but blows could extinguiſh*. It is the *obſervation* of the wiſeſt of Men, that a *ſoft anſwer turneth away wrath*, and mens *paſſions* are like *bullets* which batter the walls which ſtand inflexible, but fall harmleſly into Wool or Feathers; and I doubt not common experience will atteſt it, that none do generally fall under fewer of theſe ſtorms, than they, who are thus prepar'd to bear them. Let a meek and an angry perſon caſt up their Accounts together, and compare the number of affronts and contumelies they have met with, and I believe the *odds* will be as *great*, as between *Sauls* thouſands and *Davids* ten thouſands. 'Tis certain that the return made to the firſt injury provokes a new one; men being ſo partial to themſelves, that he who receives a harm by way of *retaliation*, never reflects on his own firſt guilt, but looks on it as a naked *injury*, and ſo purſues his Revenge, which has again the ſame effect on the other, and ſo this *wild fire* runs round, till it have ſet all in a *flame*; made the ſaddeſt vaſtations, not only in mens *minds*, but their outward *concernments* too, in the many fatal outrages, which theſe eager contentions occaſion, all which would be avoided by a meek diſregard of the firſt provocation; So that although ſome injuries may fall upon the Paſſive man, yet infallibly there would be no broils and quarrels, which are alone the great accumulators and multipliers of injuries; which alone demonſtrates how unjuſtly *meekneſs* is charg'd with ſo much as an accidental production of them; and vindicates that *precept* of *Chriſt* which has fallen under ſo much, not only *cavil* but *ſcorn*; it appearing, that to abſtain from revenge, and refer the hazards of that to Gods providence (which is the importance of his command to *turn the cheek*) is the greateſt even moral *ſecurity* againſt *violence*, and ſo approves our *Law giver* (in this ſo decried particular) to be as well the *wonderful Counſeller*, as the *Prince of Peace*.

IN the next place, if we weigh the *precept* of humility and lowlineſs in the *balance* of ſober diſcourſe, we ſhall certainly find it hold a *juſt weight*. Indeed *pride* is nothing but *deceit*, a mere cheat and deluſion, and ſo every man can diſcern it in another, we *there* are able to trace the windings of this *Serpent*, and ſay *this* man thinks himſelf more wiſe, *this* more learned, a *third* more holy than he is: yet alas! in our own breaſts we diſcern

diſcern not the *Abuſe*, ſuffer him to perſwade *us* what he but promis'd to our *firſt Parents*, that we are *as Gods*, ſomething ſo ſuper-excellent, that all muſt reverence and adore: And herein we take him at his word, never ſuſpect theſe glorious *Attributions* may be no more than *complement* or Flattery; or what is no leſs obvious, *deriſion* and *ſcorn*. To a conſidering man 'twould be a ſhrewd *preſumption* againſt whatever *pride* ſuggeſts, that 'tis attended always by *ſelf-love*, which is, as it were, the *common Setter* to all thoſe cheats which circumvent and fool us: But there want not alſo more convincing proofs of its deceit and unſincerity. When e're we over ween and believe well of our ſelves, it is in contemplation of ſome *imaginary* or elſe *real* good; ſomewhat a Man has not, or ſomewhat that he has: If we do it upon the former account, that is undeniably a groſs *deluſion*; a kind of *deceptio viſus*, a filling the Eye with phantaſtick *Aerial* Images, which have no *ſolid* Being: And God knows, ſuch *Phaſmes*, ſuch Apparitions are moſt of thoſe *excellencies* which men applaud in themſelves; things conjur'd up by the *Magick* of a ſtrong imagination, and are only ſeen within that *Circle* in which the *Enchanter* ſtands: And though *Satan* be the *grand Maſter of this black Art*, yet his *Pupils* are now grown ſo dexterous, that he ſeldom needs to be call'd in; our own partialities and fondneſſes to our ſelves, are abundantly ſufficient for the purpoſe. But in the *ſecond* place we ſuppoſe the things to be *really* exiſtent in us, yet *pride* runs us upon an *other error* no leſs dangerous than the *former*, for it betrays us to miſtake the true *owner* of them, emboldens us to ſet our own mark upon thoſe *rich Wares*, in whoſe acqueſt we have not been ſo much as *Factors*; God is the one great Author and Proprietor of all that is or can be valuable in us; to his Providence or his grace we ow all the accompliſhment of our outward or inward man, and though he allows us the *uſe* and benefit of them, yet the *glory* is a ſpecial *royalty* which (as the Gold or Silver Mines of a Nation) is reſerved to his *Crown*, an incommunicable piece of his *Regality*. And how wofully does our *pride* beſool us, when it brings us in ſuch falſe *Inventories* of our goods, makes us dream our ſelves rich by anothers wealth; like *children* that *call every thing theirs which looks ſplendidly*, or the mad *Athenian* celebrated by *Horace* for his happy phrenzie, that *reſolv'd all the Ships and Wares his own that came into the Cities harbour:*

bour: But how more ſadly does it betray us, when it thus puts us upon the invaſion of *his* propriety, who is not, as the impotent *Monarchs* of the Earth, unable to aſſert his own *rights*, but can certainly *vindicate* himſelf to our *confuſion*; againſt whom no rebellion can be any longer proſperous than he willingly permits it, and who has ſolemnly avowed *he will not give his glory to another*: And when our *pride* makes us thus both ridiculous and miſerable, when it ſeduces us not only into the folly of *children* and extravagancies of *Lunaticks*, but at once into the guilt of bold, and puniſhment of improſperous *rebels*: Certainly reaſon can never become its *Advocate*, or put in any *demur* to that *ſentence* which excludes ſo treacherous a *gueſt* out of mens hearts; which is the ſole aim of thoſe *laws of humility* which *Chriſt* has given us.

NOR will the Precepts of *temperance* and *purity* find any *worſe doom* at this *Bar*, the contrary *vices* being ſuch indignities and contumelies unto humane nature, as can never find any *countenance* from this Supreme part of it: 'Tis the prerogative of our Reaſon, that it diſcriminates us *from*, and elevates us *above* beaſts: nor can it ever be brought to reſign this ſo glorious a priviledge, aſſent to the admiſſion of thoſe bruti ſh appetites which would over-run the *Soul*, level its *ſuperior* with its *inferior* faculties; confound the diſtinction of *rational* and *ſenſitive*, and in a word, render the *Beaſt* ſo ravenous as to eat up the *Man*. Yet *thus* it is in thoſe ſordid Sins of *intemperance* and *uncleanneſs*, unleſs perhaps they are ſo much worſe than *beſtial* that I wrong the generality of the Brutes in the compariſon, it being only ſome few of them, the very *beaſts* of the Beaſts that are guilty of any ſuch *exceſſes*; for generally their *appetites* do not tranſgreſs the *regular ends* of *nature*, they know no ſuch diſeaſe as *ſurfeiting*, but eat to ſatisfie *hunger*, and couple at ſuch ſeaſons as beſt tend to preſerve their kind; and then 'tis to be conſider'd, how baſe, how *degenerous* a deſcent it is for us to ſtoop, not only below our *own* nature, but *theirs*; what a *ſolitude* theſe vices reduce us to, that not ſo much as the nobler ſort of *beaſts* will bear us *company*, we muſt wander upon the *mountains* to court a *Goat*, we muſt rake the *mire* to find a *Swine*, before we can furniſh our ſelves with any *aſſociates*: And ſure all this is ſo open an *hoſtility* againſt Reaſon, that it can by no means

means be her *interest* to abet it. Ask her whether she would be *prest to death* with *loads of meat*, whether she would be *drown'd* in *flouds of drink*, whether she would be *suffocated* with the *noisom vapours of putrefaction* and rottenness, and the *answer* she gives to these tells you her sence of *Gluttony*, *Drunkenness* and *Uncleanness*: Alas! she suffers from them the most barbarous outrages, is invaded not only in her *authority*, but her very *Being*, and therefore even upon the so celebrated principle of self-preservation, must muster all her forces to vindicate the injury and defend her self. And then certainly *Christs commands* of *sobriety* and *purity* must needs be entertain'd with all *alacrity* and *gladness*, as an accession of *strength* to her party, an *aid* to assist her in that just and necessary *War*.

AND as *reason* thus pronounces against the sins of the *flesh*, so in the next place does it certainly against those of the *world*. *Mammon* himself will not be able to bribe this *Judge*, but when *Christs precept* of Charity and liberality comes before this *tribunal*, it will infallibly be not only *acquitted* but *magnified* and applauded, be call'd from the *Bar* to the *Bench*, Commissioned like the *Jews*, *Hest.* 9. *To bear rule over them that hated them*; to dissipate at once the wealth and the covetousness of the *worldling*; have the *keys* put into its hand; that it may have free access to his *Coffers*; this certainly must be the event of this tryal, for 'tis confessedly the part of *reason* to *dispose* every thing to those *uses* which are most *proper* and *advantageous*, such as may bring in most *real benefit* to the owner. Now what other employment of *wealth* is there (after competent accommodations are provided) which can contribute to a mans *felicity*? If it be laid out like the *rich mans* in the Gospel *in delicious fare*, or *Purple* and *fine Linnen*; certainly it makes no least approach towards it. First, for excessive Fare, if a man be *not excessive* too in the eating what does he *enjoy* of it? *Meat* has no natural propriety to the *eye*, and can make no impressions of pleasure there; but if he be *voracious* and intemperate, 'tis then so far from making him *happy*, that it dejects him into the *forlorn condition*, even now mentioned, sets him at odds with his *reason*, his very *manhood*, nay, I may add with his very *sense* too; the displacencies that he

he receives by the conſequences of his exceſs, far out-weighing all that is grateful in it. This is well deſcrib'd by the *Wiſe man*, *Eccl.* 31: 19.

AS for the *gayety of Apparel*, that can never in ſober judging be thought any *advantage*; 'tis that which only *youth* and *folly* puts a value upon, and as we out-grow the one, ſo do we the other: All that is convenient in Cloaths is as well, nay, better provided for without it: A *rich ſuit* is only *heavier*, not *warmer* than a plain; and it is a kind of prodigy to ſee *how heavy vanity*, which is in it ſelf ſo *light*, ſits upon ſome men; who are content even to make themſelves *Porters*, ſo their *Tailors* may lay on the *burthen*: And thus in many other inſtances the fineneſs of Cloaths deſtroys the eaſe, ſo that it often *helps* men to pain, but can never *rid* them of any; the body may be languiſhing and infirm under the moſt ſplended cover: *Herods royal apparel* ſecures him not from being *eaten with worms*; and *Lazarus his Ulcers* would have been never the leſs *painful*, though they had been *wrapt in* Dives *his fine Linnen*?

OR if the *wealth* be laid out on any other part of *that* the world calls *greatneſs*, as an *honourable retinue*, *Troops of attendants*, and the like; the return will be no leſs *empty*: Multitudes of unprofitable *ſervants* being a great *burthen*, but no degree of *advantage*. Alas! does my *meat* reliſh ever the better, becauſe my *table* is ſurrounded with *waiters*? Or when I go out, does my *train of followers* make the *Air* the *more refreſhing* to me, does not rather the *duſt* they raiſe make it *leſs*, annoy and ſtifle me? As for *matter of buſineſs*, the number of *ſervants* tends rather to *hinder* than *advance* it; daily experience atteſting, that in crouds of domeſticks every one of them thinks his idleneſs will be hid: the care of *doing* and the guilt of *omitting* is transferr'd from one to another, and none has any farther *thought*, than how he may *quit* himſelf either of the *burthen* or the *blame*; ſo that upon the final account all that accrues to a *Maſter* by the *greatneſs of his family* is the *encreaſe of his care* in the regiment of it: A great deal of vigilance and circumſpection being requir'd to keep it in any tolerable *order*, and if it be not ſo kept, his Houſe becomes a *wilderneſs*, and himſelf a *prey* to the Beaſts he feeds: The licentiouſneſs of the Servant redounding more ways than one to the damage of the *Maſter*.

IF we ſhould now proceed more *minutely* to every other *ſingle*

expenſe

expence which *vanity* and *pride* ſuggeſts, we ſhould certainly find the like ſucceſs of our inqueſt; nothing of *real felicity*, but on the contrary the *vanity* ſo interwoven and incorporate with *vexation of Spirit*, that 'tis impoſſible to ſever them: So that *thus* to employ ones riches is rather to *ſuffer* than *enjoy* them. But if we ſuppoſe a man on the other ſide ſuch a *Reverer of his Wealth*, that he dares not *employ* it at all, unleſs it be at the *bank*, for the bringing in of more, that keeps it as men do beaſts reſerv'd for breed, manumit them from all work but that of propagation. Such a perſon is ſurely of all others the fartheſt from receiving any advantage by it: he converts it from a *ſervant* into a *tyrant*, and ſad experience ſhews us the calamity of ſuch a tranſmutation. It has been always held the *ſevereſt treatment* of *ſlaves* and *Malefactors damnari ad Metalla*, force them to dig in Mines; now this is the *covetous mans lot*, from which he is never to expect a *releaſe*, as being his own remorſeleſs and more than *Egyptian task-maſter*: and the parallel holds too, in the gainleſneſs as well as laborioſuneſs of the work; Thoſe wretched *creatures* buried in *earth* and darkneſs were never the *richer* for all the Ore they digg'd, no more is the *inſatiate Miſer*, he has no power to *diſpoſe* of any of his *acqueſts*; and though he calls them *his*, yet alas he *poſſeſſes* them no otherwiſe than a *priſoner* does his *Goal*, a *Mad-man* his *chains*, they are only *inſtruments* of his *thraldom*, and the getting more ſerves only to add more weight to his Shackles; and certainly *wealth* can be no way worſe diſpos'd, than thus to buy ſo baſe a *ſervitude*.

AND now ſince neither the *luxurious* ſpending, nor the *covetous* keeping can *advantage* us one ſtep towards any thing that can be call'd *happy*; but do on the contrary *engage* us upon toil and *miſery*: *Wealth* ſeems to be a very oppreſſive *burthen*, ſuch as we can neither *caſt off*, nor ſafely *bear*; and truly ſo it is till *charity* comes in to our Aid; which as the proper *element of Wealth*, renders that *light* which gravitates elſewhere, and as the *Elixir* unto *Metals* transforms them into *Gold*, ſtamps *purity* and *price* upon them: by freely giving, endows the *donor* with whatever he beſtows; enriches *him*, and what is more, enriches *wealth* it ſelf. Without this *art of uſing*, and diſpoſing our eſtates, we are thoſe *Indians* who change their Gold for Glaſs: that ſilly *Fiſherman*, who having found a *maſs of Ambergreece*, employed

employed it to the *liquoring of his Boots*; are foolish to the height of *Midas* in the Fable; who being promis'd to have what ever he would *wish*, made his *demand* that every thing he toucht might presently be Gold, and run the hazard that he did of being *starv'd* by our unhappy affluence: Men say indeed that *Gold by preparation* becomes a *soveraign cordial*, but certainly it never does rejoyce the heart so much as when Charity is the *Chymist*; the *poor mans hand* is the best *Limbeck* to extract this *Magistery* and *tincture*, the *flames of love* will really perform those *miracles*, they of the Furnace boast of; and would they employ themselves in this *laboratory*, they would find the *omnipotent efficacy* they dream of, sooner in this way of *dissipating*, than in all their *arts*, or rather Fancies of generating Gold. 'Tis certainly a most generous and enlivening pleasure which results from a *seasonable liberality*: When I see a man strugling with *want*, his very spirit as well as body stooping under the pressure; if I then relieve him, the *humane nature* within me which is common to us both, does by a kind of *Sympathetick motion* exult and raise up it self; but if I have any *piety*, that must do it much more; for as the *former* shew'd me *my own image* in my poor *brother*, so *this* shews me *Gods*: and how transcendent a satisfaction must it be, to have thus rescued him who bears so divine an impress, to have paid some part of *gratitude* to my Creator for my own *being*, by making my self, in my low sphere, the giver or preserver of that life, which he first breathed into another? *This*, and this only is the *way* to raise a *felicity* out of *wealth*; and surely since the attaining of *happiness* is the one grand *pursuit* of our *reason*, that must even before it has subjected it self to the *faith of Christ*, give assent to the *prudence of his Command* in *this* as well as the *former* instances.

BUT there remains a *precept* of our *Saviours* allied to this; which seems by no means to *comport* and *hold a correspondence* with the dictates of *right reason*; the *taking up the Cross*, and *suffering for righteousness sake*; which contradicts the fundamental law of self preservation, and the great end of being, felicity and happiness. But this *suggestion*, how specious soever it appear, is utterly *fallacious*; for 'tis no good consequence, that because *reason* aims at our being *happy*, therefore it forbids us all *voluntary sufferings*, since that the case may be so set, that *such a suffering* may be the *fairest medium* left us to our *happiness*. 'Tis a known

known rule, that *of two evils the least is to be chosen*; and the election of the lesser ill, though it be no *absolute*, yet is a *comparative* good; and its *attainment* as far as the necessity of our affairs permit, is our *felicity*: and reason can provide no further. Now this is the estate of the present instance: *two evils* are propos'd, *natural* and a *moral*; the Natural, though in its self to be averted, yet much inferior to the Moral, and then *reason* soon resolves the *Dilemma*, that the *natural is to be chosen*: All that can be question'd in this affair, is *whether reason define the moral evil to be the greater*, but this can bear no long dispute with any who consider but the *nature of reason*, which being seated in the *upper soul* of a man, is no way concern'd in those *Ills*, which make their impression on the *sensitive part*: but *moral* ills strike higher, invade the *mind*, cloud the *reason*; nay, often depose it from its regiment, as is too frequently exemplified in the force of vicious habits; and therefore by how much our *reason* is superior to our *sense*, so much are those to be accounted the *greatest evils*, which assault that *nobler part* of us. This certainly will now be the *determination* of Reason, if she may be permitted the freedom of her vote: for thus was it formerly, where she bare the most sway, and uncontrouled rule; the wisest and best considering of *humane*, as well as *divine Authors* having establish't it as an undoubted *Aphorism*, that *honesty is to be prefer'd before both gainful and pleasant*: so that nothing renders a man so *deplorable*, as that which violates his *integrity*; nay they have generally gone higher, exhorted men to *become volunteers in vertues warfare*, *not to suspend their sufferings*, *till they were forc'd out by the competition of a crime*; *but offer themselves free oblations*. Thus to suffer for ones *country* or ones *friend*, was thought so *worthy*, so *heroick* a thing, that *noble* and *ingenuous spirits* were *emulous* of it: and it was so stated a case that *Epictetus* forbids a man, on such an occasion to consult with the *Oracle*, whether he should do it or no, it being *necessary* to be done, whatever ill success or ruine be predicted, ἐὰν ὁ θεὸς συμφέρῃ, ἢ μὴ σοὶ μὲν σώζεσθαι, ἢ φυγὴν, and how serious they were in these *perswasions*, some of them have *practically* evidenced, as having *suffered* very considerable pressures, nay *death* it self, rather than they would bow to the *predominant vices* of their Age, or omit the occasion

of *eminent vertue*. *Ariſtides* would be juſt in ſpight of the *Oſtraciſm*. *Regulus* obſervant of his *oath* made to a *faithleſs enemy*, though *death* and *torment* attended the *performance*. *Lycurgus* to perpetuate to his Citizens the benefit of his *good Laws*, as ſubtilly deſigns *perpetual baniſhment* unto himſelf, as others uſe to contrive for *honour* and for *empire* there. *Codrus* redeems the ſafety of his *army* with his own *death*: *Curtius* makes himſelf a *Martyr* for his *country*, and *Socrates* in the ſtricter ſence becomes one for his *God*: laid down his *life* in atteſtation of that moſt *fundamental truth* and leading *article of Faith*, πιστεύειν εἰς ἕνα θεὸν, the *belief* of *one God*. And yet we find not that *thoſe times*, which were ſo *ill* as to ſhed his *blood*, were yet ſo *bad* as to defame his *memory*; he's not recorded either as *fool* or *hypochondriack*; nor have his *ſufferings* ſtruck him out of the liſt of *Philoſophers*: but he ſtands there the more conſpicuouſly in thoſe *bloudy characters*, and however the credit of the *Oracle* may be otherwiſe diſparaged, it never was on this account, that it had declared *Socrates* to be the *wiſeſt of Men*. And yet both he and the reſt, had either *none*, or very *imperfect* confus'd apprehenſions of a future *reward*, when they engaged on preſent Suffering, and death it ſelf: So that we might be tempted to imagine, that ſome ſtrange change and *tranſmutation* has now befaln *virtue*, that it has put on ſo much a *diſtant* appearance from its *ancient* ſelf, that the acceſſion of new obligations, and higher hopes, ſhould abſolve, avert and utterly diſpirit us; inſomuch that what was Conſtancy in a *Heathen*, ſhould be Folly in a *Chriſtian*. Certainly this is a *Metamorphoſis* of our own making, we look through deforming *optick-glaſſes*, ſuch as our *avarice* or effeminate *ſenſualities* convey into our hands, which give not only *ſtrange* and ghaſtly, but withal *ridiculous ſhapes*; but if we would conſult our *reaſon*, that would ſhew us things in their *proper forms*. Virtue and Reaſon are both the ſame they were ſo many hundred years ago, and where the *object* and the *faculty* admit of no *mutation*, 'tis impoſſible there ſhould really be any ſuch *variable appearance*. If *Socrates* were ſo zealous for the *one God*, that he choſe rather to relinquiſh his *life*, than to conſent to, or but connive at the *profane rivalry of Polytheiſm*, and yet be no Fool; certainly we may as ſecurely tranſcribe his copy: and though the particular Article may not be the ſame; yet if it be any thing wherein virtue is concern'd,

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the cause is no less warrantable: He that suffers for a *practical* Point, is no more a prodigal of his pains, than he that lays them out on the highest *speculative*. The *Commandments* may have as good *Martyrs* as the *Creed*; for the same *authority* has requir'd our *obedience* to the *one*, that exacts our *faith* of the *other*. Nor is there any necessity of *Heathen* or *Jewish* Tribunal, to convert our sufferings to *Martyrdom*; we may receive that crown from the hands of those that own the same faith with us. Those that say with the most seeming vehemence, *Let the Lord be glorified*, may yet hate and cast out their brethren for his names sake, *Isai.* 66: 5. He that tells me I fear not *God so much* as he, may yet persecute me for honouring the *King more*; and my *blood* pour'd out upon that account, becomes an *acceptable sacrifice* to him, who has commanded my Subjection to the *higher Powers*. He who calls Christ his *head*, may yet rend and tear his Body; and if I love its communion so well, as to take my share in the *Massacre*, I approach toward that dignity and comfort *S. Paul* so glories in, of *filling up that which is behind, of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his bodies sake which is the Church*, *Col.* 1: 24. He that mulcts the more *indeliberate* Oaths, may yet enjoyn a solemn Perjury: and if I chuse he should rather make havock of my *goods* than my Conscience; my *spoils* become not more monuments of his *rapine* than my *piety*; they plead my *innocence* before him who *will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*: and how profanely soever my *wealth* is dispos'd by him that seises it, 'tis accounted to me, as cast into the *treasury*; and so 'tis possible I may at once vie with the *rich men* in the greatness of the oblation, and with the *poor widow* too in that higher circumstance of its being all. In summ, the opportunities of *Martyrdom* are not restrained to those points wherein *Christians* differ from *Jews* or *Heathens*, but extend to all wherein we Christians differ from our rule, the commands of our blessed Master. If I suffer for my *constancy* to any of them, I have certainly my place in *Gods Martyrologie*, as well as if I had faln under any of the *ten Persecutions*. God was not so partial to the *primitive Christians* as to allow them the *Monopoly* and enclosure of that dignity; if *they* as our *elder brethren* had a *double portion*, yet there is still a *childs part* left for every

one of us, enough to teſtifie our *legitimation*, and ſecure us from the brand of *baſtardy*, *Heb.* 12. 'Twas *S. Pauls* indefinite affirmation, and all times ſince have born witneſs to the truth of it; That *all that will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution.* Some *unfaſhionable vertues* there have been in every Age, which have whetted, if not the *Swords*, yet the *Tongues* of men: and thoſe that happen not to fall under *Abels* perſecution, muſt not hope to eſcape that of *Iſaac*: If they meet with no *Cain* to *kill*, they will undoubtedly with an *Iſhmael* to *mock* them. But in what dreſs ſoever our *ſufferings* appear, a *good cauſe* diveſts them of their *frightful ſhape*, pulls off the *ugly viſard*, and ſhews us a *beauty* that lay there conceal'd; and that not only to the Eye of our *faith* but our *reaſon* too. *Fortitude* was a *vertue* before *Chriſtianity* had a name in the world; and the very inſtinct of our *nature whiſpers* within us, the *baſeneſs* of being baffled out of a Truth or Vertue; yet ſuch a deſpicable *coward* is every man that wants this *paſſive valour*, without which the *active* muſt find another name; Rage or Phrenſie it may be, in ſome perhaps natural *courage*, or ſanguineſs of temper in others, but true Valour it is not, if it knows not as well to *ſuffer* as to *do*. That *mind* is truly great, and only that which ſtands above the *power* of all *extrinſick violence*; which keeps it ſelf a diſtinct *principality* independent upon the outward man, ſo that it is not ſubjected to its fate; that can be *free*, when the body is faſt *bound* in Miſery and Iron, *ſound* and *healthy*, when that *groans* under torture, and is never more *ſtrong* and *vital*, than when that *languiſhes* and *expires*; and this is ſo deſirable, ſo tranſcendent a *priviledge*, as *reaſon* cannot but *aſpire* to: and this is it to which this excellent *precept* of Chriſts advances us when we thus *ſuffer for righteouſneſs ſake*, our Minds are all *light*, what *darkneſs* ſoever involve our exterior part, and is like *Goſhen* exempt and ſecure, when that falls under all the Plagues of *Ægypt*.

AND what reaſon thus embraces for it ſelf, 'tis not imaginable that it ſhould reject, becauſe 'tis richly clad; that the Race ſhould ſeem the more tedious, becauſe there is a Crown within view; or that the glorious *rewards* our Chriſtianity propoſes to our conſtancy, ſhould be eſteemed as *menaces* and *threats*, Temptations to deſert or turn Apoſtates. No certainly,

tainly, Reason cannot dispute, and make an *inference* so utterly *illogical*, but will rather use it as an *enforcement* of its former *conclusion*, establish it the more firm and immoveable by having the *basis* thus enlarged, having *reward* added to *virtue*, and *happiness* entail'd on *duty*. If in the competition between two Evils, *reason* pronounce the *lesser eligible*: Much more will she resolve, when the contest is 'twixt *good and evil*, the greatest Evil and the greatest Good; and chuse that *excellence* which though *superlative* in it self, is more endear'd and heightned by *comparison*. If I violate my *reason*, if I renounce *virtue*, though bare and naked, then surely I do it yet more when she is thus *accomplisht* and adorn'd; when *beautified* on purpose to allure the *eye*, and take the *heart*. When over and above the positive donation of Happiness, she adds a rescue and release from *misery*, and equally obliges by the distant prospects of a Hell and Heaven. So that not only the *Gospel-promises*, but even *menaces* and *threats* become a *weapon* in the hand of *reason*, when she stands upon her *guard*, and fights for *virtue*. If *sin* present it self as my *Protector* from a *temporal* Calamity, *reason* will tell me hence, that the proffer is insidious, it exposes me to that which is *infinitely worse* than what it pretends to save me from; and that not only in the former respect of Guilt, but in that of Punishment also. What a cheat is it to keep me out of the *dungeon*, and send me to the *bottomless pit*, to save me from a *temporary fire*, and thereby mark me out as Fuel for *eternal flames*; to take me out of *their hands* who can *kill the body*, to put me into *his* who can *destroy both soul and body in Hell*? *Reason* tells me I am to abhor the *turpitude* and *soulness* of a Crime; and it tells me too, I am to dread the *misery* and Smart of it also. It would not have me wallow in the *mire*, though it were *safe*, much less when it is full of *Asps* and *Vipers*, which will infallibly sting me to death. It cries out with *Joseph*, *How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God*? And it cries out with *Esai* too, *Who can dwell with everlasting fire*? In a word, by the domestick native *light* of the *candle of the Lord* set up within our *breast*, it shews the ugliness of *sin*; and shews it too by the affrightful dismal *blaze* of those *unquenchable flames* it kindles: Thus by the different *arguments* of terror and endearment, of love and fear, of interest and duty, *reason* asserts this

ſcorn'd, decried, neglected *precept*: Take her as mere *Paynim* abſtracting from the expectation of reward or puniſhment; or take her as a *Proſelyte* to Chriſt, contemplating his promiſes and threats, if there be *honeſty*, or if there be *religion*, in either inſtance the Soul muſt ſtill conclude, that *Affliction is to be choſen rather than Iniquity.*

AND if it be reaſonable thus to *reſiſt even unto bloud ſtriveing againſt ſin*, if *reaſon* blow the *trumpet*, ſound the *alarm* to this ſolemn *War*, then ſurely it preſcribes ſomething of *Martial diſcipline* to prepare and diſpoſe us for thoſe *combats*. No expert *General* will bring a company of raw untrain'd men into the *field*, but will by little bloudleſs skirmiſhes inſtruct them in the manner of the *fight*, teach them the ready managery of their *weapons*; and of this ſort are all thoſe *voluntary ſelf-denials*, and lighter auſterities which Chriſtianity commends to us, which become neceſſary not ſimply for themſelves, but as inſtruments towards a higher end. The Military fame the *Romans* had in the World was atchieved by the exact diſcipline of their Camps, enuring their Souldiers to labour and hardſhip. And, *Tacitus* tells us, when a *long peace* had ſlackned the reins of diſcipline, that *active humour*, which was wont to be ſpent on the Enemy, recoil'd, and flew in the face of their Commanders, begat nothing but *mutinies* and diſorders; and certainly 'twill be the ſame in our *Chriſtian warfare*, if we abandon our ſelves to Eaſe and Sloth, never attempt to wreſtle with a difficulty, but keep our ſelves in the poſture the *Iſraelites* Camp was in at *Moſes's* deſcent from the Mount, *eating and drinking, and riſeing up to play*; our appetites will grow licentious and inſolent, paſt our controul and guidance. If we treat them with ſuch an indulgence as is recorded of *David* to *Adonijah*, never ſay ſo much as *why haſt thou done this?* 'Tis not to be expected but they will Rebel, though a *Solomon* ſit in the *Throne*. For alas, how is it imaginable, that he who never denied himſelf any the *ſmalleſt* or *moſt trifling pleaſure* he had a mind to, ſhall on a ſudden deny *all in the groſs?* He who has projected *many* but never wav'd *one* Opportunity of ſhewing his *wit*, how ſhall he find in his heart to become a *fool for Chriſt?* He that has gratified his *palate* with all that pretends to be guſtful to it, how ſhall he deſcend to the *bread of affliction*? Or he that never

never tried to miss a Meal, how will he entertain the unwelcome contrariety of not knowing where to get one? He who has never abated any thing of the utmost *pomp* he could reach, how will he brook the *want* of *necessaries*; or from his House ceil'd with *Cedar*, and painted with *Vermilion*, be content with is *Saviours* Lot, *not to have where to lay his head*? In short, how shall he who never could pare off any of the *excrescencies*, the mere *vanities* and *gayeties* of an estate, part with it *all*; or lay down that *life for Christs sake*, from which he never substracted one smallest *pleasure*? *Suffering* is a thing to which the *sensitive* part of us has an Innate *aversion*, and Aversions are not to be subdued at once, but by gentle and easie *degrees*; and custom must have introduc'd a second nature, before that original part of our temper will be supplanted. As 'tis therefore highly reasonable for every man to aspire to the *dominion* of himself, to keep his *affections* within his own *power* and *command*; and though he have no *interest* at all in the *greater*, enjoy a soveraignty in the *lesser* World: So in order to that, 'tis as reasonable to discipline and tame them by some voluntary *acts* of *restraint*, like *Hannibal*, sometimes to *pass by that water to which his thirsts do most importunately invite him*. To try by little *skirmishes* what strength and skill he has, before he runs the fatal hazard of a *battel*. To deny himself in the lesser instances, that so when the greater come, they may not have the *disadvantage* of Uncouthness and perfect Strangeness to enhanse their *difficulty*. And this must certainly be acknowledg'd *reasonable*, or else we must condemn almost all the receiv'd *rules* of *humane transactions*, which generally have this for their *ground work*, that men must pass through the *first principles* and *lowest rudiments* of any Art, before they can arrive at its height. Men serve *Apprentiships* to Trades, and think not themselves the first day *Masters* of their craft; we advance in *learning* by leasurable and slow steps, and skip not from the *A B C* to the *Metaphysicks*: And certainly the skill of *Christian suffering* is not the easiest of all *Trades* or *Sciences*; but will require some time of *Initiation*; many repeated Trial and Essays to bring us into an acquaintance with it: To convince our *understandings*, and perswade our *wills*, that *to lose our lives is to save them*; and *to be faithful unto the death*, is the best way *to gain a crown of life*.

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IF I ſhould now proceed to every other *precept* of Chriſt, and examine it by the *rules* of *ſober diſcourſe*, we ſhould infallibly find them ſo rational as befits the Laws of *him* who is the *eternal reaſon*; but having made theſe *eſſays* in ſome of the moſt oppos'd Inſtances, I ſhall preſume theſe may paſs as the *repreſentatives* of *all* the reſt; and the acquittal theſe have received at the Tribunal of Reaſon virtually involve them all.

AND now ſince both *conſcience* and *reaſon* have pronounc'd the ſame of Chriſts *Law*, that *Pilate* did of his *Perſon*, that *they find in them no fault at all*; methinks *Judges* ſhould have the ſame *priviledge* that is allowed to *private Men*, that *in the mouth of two every word may be eſtabliſh'd*: But if any man be ſo ſcrupulous as not to reſt in the ſentence of *leſs* than a *Triumvirate*, let him *in Gods name* bring in a *third*, and when his vicious *appetites* (which were before excepted to as parties) are ſet aſide, he cannot be diſtracted in his *choice*, there being but *one* more that can poſſibly be call'd in, and that is *experience*, which being a *Judge* that himſelf muſt create, he cannot fear it ſhould be prejudic'd againſt him; ſo that he may entertain full confidence of its *integrity*: And no leſs may he do of its *ability*, this being the moſt infallible of humane determinations, ſuch as often corrects the *error* of *ſpeculation*; and ſhews us the vanity of *concluding* what is *practicable in matter* from being *demonſtrated in the Scheme* or *Diagram*; The *guidance* of an *illiterate traveller* in the way that he has gone, being far more uſeful to a *ſtranger* in his journey, than the beſt *Maps* and moſt exact *deſcriptions* of *Geographers*. But then it muſt be indeed *experience*, and not only ſome ſlight and tranſient Eſſay. We call not him an *experienc'd Phyſician* that has had *one Patient*, or a *Lawyer* that has pleaded *one Cauſe*. *Experience* is the *daughter* of *time*, and is made up of many *ſucceſſive trials*, as a *habit* is of *multiplied acts*: And to the *verdict* of ſuch an Experience Chriſts *precepts* will not fear to *ſtand*; let a man put himſelf into a ſetled courſe of *obedience* to them, abſtain ſo long from all *prohibited commiſſions*, as may wear out the *rank taſte* wherewith his *palate* has been ſeaſon'd, and leave it free and diſengag'd, and then infallibly he will find ſuch a *ſavour* and *ſweetneſs* in thoſe *virtues*, that we will wonder how he came to be cheated

cheated into an *opinion* of their being *bitter* and *unsavoury*; and will have no *appetite* to *return to his Onions and his Garlick*, after he has thus been fed with *Quails* and *Manna*. That this will be the *event* of his *experiment* there is all *ground of certainty*, and when the *trial* is once made, so irrefragable an *evidence* will follow, that it will not leave a man the *power to doubt*: Only in the *interim* so much *belief* is requisite, as may let him into the *demonstration*, make him set to *that* Practice from whence he is to reap all *this*: And if any man be so much a *Sceptick*, as not to have *faith* enough to put him on the *adventure*, I should at once for his *conviction* and *punishment*, wish but that he might a-while extend the same *distrust* to Affairs of *common life*: Let him doubt whether his *meat* be savory, and *refuse to eat*; whether his *cloaths* be warm, and so *go naked*; whether his *house* be firm, and *lye without doors*: and when he has a while thus smarted under his own *discipline*, let him but apply the *wisdom* he has thus bought to the present *instance*, and it will unquestionably resolve his *scruple*; or if he be still too Impatient to attend the ripening of his own Experience, let him make use of other mens. Let him appeal to any who has inur'd his *neck* to Christs *yoke*, and ask him whether it be *galling* and *pinching*, or whether it be not *easie*, nay *gracious*. Let him ask one who by repeated restraints hath subdued and tamed his *natural rage* or *pride*, how he likes the *change*, and undoubtedly he will tell him, 'tis no less *happy* than a *calm* is after the noise and danger of a violent *tempest*, or the ease of a broken *imposthume* after the painful gathering and filling of it. Let him ask one who has divested himself of all his *sensual sins*, whether by their *absence* he now discern not their *necessity*, and he will tell them, 'tis but the same the *primitive Christians* had of those *beasts skins* wherein their *persecutors* had clad them, whose only use was by *deforming* to fit them for *devouring*. Let him come to the converted *Mammonist*, and ask him, which he finds the better *treasury*, his *own* Coffer or the poor mans Bowels, and he will be able to assure him he is become *much richer* by having *less in store*. Let him come to the devout *Ascetick*, and ask him what *taste* he find in *Daniels* unpleasant *bread*, *Dan.* 10: 3. and he will tell him *infinitely more* than ever he did in *Dives's delicious fare*; that cloy'd and surfeited the flesh, this nou-

riſhes and ſupports the ſpirit. Nay finally, let him come to him that is actually *ſuffering for righteouſneſs ſake*, and he will exemplifie to him the *beatitude* which Chriſt has pronounc'd of ſuch: Let him viſit *Paul* and *Silas* in the *Priſon*, and he ſhall hear them *ſinging*: *Peter* and the other *Apoſtles* after their *ſtripes* and beating, and he ſhall find them *rejoycing*; And *Stephen* amidſt the Throng of his *murderers* and Tempeſt of their *ſtones*, and he ſhall obſerve him overlooking them all, and entertaining himſelf with a more *pleaſant proſpect*, ſeeing the *Heavens open'd and Jeſus ſtanding at the right hand of God*; and why ſhould not other mens ſucceſſes animate our endeavours here? In temporal affairs it ſeldom miſſes to do it. The Trophies of *Miltiades* at *Marathon* diſturb'd *Themiſtocles* his ſleeps, till he had rais'd unto himſelf and *Country* more glorious ones at *Salamite*; *Cæſar* while he views *Alexanders* Image upbraids his own ſlackneſs with the memory of his conqueſts, and inſpirits himſelf to great attempts. He that returns with a *rich fraight* from a *new found-Land* encourages others to Trade *thither* alſo: Nay, even a *begger* ſpeeds not well at an *Hoſpitable door*, but he is able to ſend *ſholes* upon the like hopes: Much leſs does he that has found a *treaſure* need to uſe his *Oratory* to invite *partakers*; and why then ſhould thoſe *few* that have made this more precious *diſcovery* be forc'd to *monopolize* it, as not being able to *draw in partners*? Yet God knows, thus it is; thoſe that hear of no *rarity* but they long for it, as *David* after the waters of *Bethlehem*, can yet hear the ſame *David* cry out, *how ſweet the Lord is!* and yet have no curioſity to taſte it: Thoſe whom the very name of *Liberty* ſo captivates, that they ſacrifice all that is really valuable to that *Chimæra*; can hear the *Apoſtle* ſpeak of the *glorious liberty of the ſons of God*, and yet like hardned *Gally ſlaves* deſpiſe the *Manumiſſion*. Thoſe that hunt after *pleaſures* till the very *purſuit* become an unſupportable *pain*, can be told of thoſe *rivers of pleaſures* wherewith God offers to quench their thirſt, and yet inflict on themſelves the *rich mans torment*, and deny ſo much as to *dip the tip of their finger* toward the *cooling* their own *flames*. Good God! what ſtrange *infatuation* is this, that while there is ſo much of *vicious envy* in the world, there ſhould be nothing of *virtuous emulation*? That mens heat and vigour ſhould all ſpend it ſelf in childiſh purſuits,

and

and leave them thus cold and stupid to their great and *serious* concernments? And what remains to him that ponders this *Epidemick* folly, but to breath out *Moses*'s Wish: O *that men were wise*; or if that be too hopeless a vote, O *that men were not so destructively foolish*; that their rashness and Error might be confin'd to their lower interests: And as *fools* are treated, *be kept from dealing in things of consequence*; that they would not govern their Souls by such an absurd kind of managery, as they will not trust with the meanest of their outward concerns. And if this might be obtain'd, if this *fatal Scitancy* which has benumb'd and frozen them were but *cast off*, they would then from the report of the *good land* be animated to their *journey*; and rather chuse to make the concurrent Testimonies of others arguments to encourage them, than *leave* them as Hand-writings to *appeal*, or Witnesses to *condemn* them. And he that shall thus borrow other mens *experience* with this *design* of *copying it out*, and lays it as a foundation for his own, thereby possesses himself of one of the greatest *advantages* of the *communion of Saints*; kindles himself at their *fire* till he grows bright and hot at it; combines his *flame* with theirs, and so encreases the Ardors of them both; follows Example till himself grows exemplary, and in one Act *receives* and *gives*. But he that thus sets out, must remember, that it is more than the journey of one day he has to go; he must not think (as I said before) that every little *superficial attempt* is that Experience which he is in quest of: He that thus phansies will be expos'd to a very dangerous deceit, for 'tis sure there is in all *habits* such a *force*, that they are not to be dispossest but by a contrary violence, and therefore he that has been under the power of any vicious *custom*, enters at first into a state of *hostility*, has such a tough *opposition*, as rather finds him Work than Pleasure: Now if he shall upon this first Essay pronounce, he is like to pass a very *unjust sentence*: Let him fight on a while till he have got some ground, and then though the War afforded him *little* pleasure, the Victory will yield him *much*. Every repeated defeat he gives his Adversary will be a new triumph to him, and what the *Romans* courted as so great a Dignity, he may every day *enjoy*. But then as he advances farther to the completing of his *victories*, so he does of his Pleasures too;

when his irregular *appetites* are so subdued, that they rarely make *insurrection*, this is such a state of *tranquillity* as gives him leisure to discern, and enjoy the delights of Christian virtue, and will teach him to reproach the highest *Panegyrick* he ever heard of it as flat and imperfect: so infinitely will he find it exceed the utmost *description*, that he will say with the Queen of *Sheba*, *the one half was not told him.* This is the rich prize which they shall obtain that *run* the race, but it is not awarded to the *first step*; and hence it is so many fail of it, that when they find the uneasiness which attends the breaking off a *custom*; this is such a *Gyant*, a son of *Anak*, as turns them back discourag'd from the *Canaan* they went to view. But alas this discovers how small a stock of Resolution they carried out with them; for where men set out with *heart* and *appetite*, 'tis not such little *difficulties* that will dismay them: if it be but their *sports* they are engag'd in, it serves to deceive the sense of many uneasinesses, nay often dangers, he that is but in chase of a silly *Hare* is so to keen upon it, that he feels not the weariness of a whole days motion, and if he meet with a *hedge* in his way will rather leap it with *hazard*, than be diverted from his Game. But 'tis sure in their sins they suffer far greater hardships without discouragement. The puny *drunkard* is not disheartned by the *first qualm*, but repeats his *excesses* till he have overcome his *queasiness*. The cast *Litigant* sits not down with one *cross verdict*, but recommences his *suit*, passes it through all *Courts*, and considers not his own *pains*, so he may either weary or force the other out of his *right*. The *unclean person* falls not out with his sin, how sadly soever it hath macerated him, but steps out of the *hot-house* into the *Stews*. And shall men be so indefatigable in their pursuits of *infelicity*, buy one *torment* with another, and drive on the year in a circle of such woful Traffick, and shall *virtue* and *pleasure* be thought not worth the smallest *labour*? Can they keep themselves in a *perpetual contention* with their *ease*, their *reason*, and their *God*; and can they not endure a short *combate* with a sinful *custom*? which if it have some *uneasiness*, yet 'tis both infinitely short of what they have suffered in the contrary compliance, and besides carries its *remedy* in its hand: For if the Difficulty arise only (as doubtless it does) from the confirm'dness of the Habit, every Act of

of resistance, as it weakens the Habit, so it abates the Difficulty. It is therefore a most *unreasonable inference*, from the *trouble* of the first opposition, to conclude the *impossibility* of the future; for if the *first* were but troublesome and not impossible, the *second* will have yet less of the trouble, and so be yet farther remov'd from impossibility, and the *third* than the *second*, and so on till the difficulty vanish and disappear. And if men would but assume such a *moderate courage*, as but to *keep the field*, and not to run away upon the first gun-shot, they would soon find how impotent *assailants* they had to deal with, who can never subdue any man by *strength*, who is not first emasculated by his own *fears*. Let us therefore to shun the report of so dishonourable a Defeat, awake and rouze our selves, put us in a *posture* of *defence*: And *Satan*, who is as cowardly as any thing in the world but we, *will*, as *S. James* assures us, *flee from us*. Let us upbraid our selves with our unseasonable hardiness and resolution in our impieties till we have chang'd the *scene*, grow impatient of those *servile drudgeries*, and ambitious of these *honourable adventures*. And to animate us the more, let us fix our *eyes* upon the glorious *prize* of the *victory*; and that not only the *final* and *eternal* in future Glory; but that *intermediate* which offers it self as the *earnest* of *That*, the calm and pleasure of a conquering piety. The *Roman* story tells us, that the *Flavianists* had so possest their minds with the *spoils* of *Vienna*, that they grew insensible of all *dangers* in the way to it, and even forc'd their General *Antonio* to put them upon those hazards which his wiser conduct would have declin'd. And why should not our more worthy *hopes* excite as great an earnestness? Why should not we have as great an *appetite* to the pillaging of *Satans camp*, plundering that infernal *Magazine* of all its *engins* both of *mine* and *battery*, its stores of *arms* and *ammunition*, leaving him naked and defenceless, unable to make any impression upon us? And this he certainly does, who by a steddy *practice of virtue*, comes to discern the *contemptibleness* of those baits wherewith he allures us. He that seeks only the *Praise of God*, looks upon the *applause* of *men* as a blast of Air, which possibly may demolish and destroy a *glorious building*, but cannot give *foundation* or *materials* to it; and therefore will not seek for, or solicite its unhappy courtships.

He who deſires to be *great* only *in the Kingdom of Heaven*, laughs at the buſie *aſpirings of ſecular greatneſs*, and wonders at the force of that *enchantment*, which engages men with ſo extreme toil, to climb a tottering *pinnacle*, where the ſtanding is uneaſie, and the fall deadly. He that covets to be *rich towards God*, and has enur'd his eyes to that *divine ſplendor* which reſults from the *beauty* of *holineſs*, is not dazled with the *glittering ſkine* of *Gold*; conſiders it as a *vein* of the ſame *earth* he treads on, and deſpiſes that abſurd *partiality* whereof the Prophet accuſes *idolaters*, to employ one part to the meaneſt uſes and fall down to the other. In a word, he that looks on the *eternal things that are not ſeen*, will through thoſe *opticks* exactly diſcern the *vanity* and *inconſiderableneſs* of all that is *viſible* and *temporary*; and ſo will be equally unmoved with the terrors or allurements of the world, and neither frighted nor flatter'd out of his duty. And he that is thus fortified diſcourages and wearies out his Tempter, deprives him not only of *weapons* but of *heart* too, and drives even *Satan* himſelf to deſperation; and when the Enemy is thus beat out of the *field*, there remains nothing but to enjoy the *victory*. When that *reluctance* and *reſiſtance* of the *corrupt appetite* is ſo weakned and ſubdued, that a man acts with *freedom*, he acts with *pleaſure* too. A *heart* thus *ſet at liberty*, alacriouſly *runs the ways of Gods commandments*: it faring with *it* as with a *Patient* that is preſcrib'd *exerciſe* for *health*; who at firſt perhaps finds *laſſitude* and *trouble* in it: but when the *obſtructions* are remov'd, and *nature* diſburthened of thoſe *noxious humors* that encumbred her, that which was at firſt his *task*, becomes his *recreation*. For we are not to think, that it is any *innate harſhneſs* in *piety* that renders the firſt *eſſays* of it unpleaſant; that is owing only to the *indiſpoſedneſs* of our own Hearts. We are in the Prophets phraſe, *bullocks unaccuſtomed to the yoke*; and if we be galled and fretted by it, 'tis becauſe of our impatient ſtrivings, and irregular motions under it, the yoke is really no heavier than it is afterwards, when it is more tamely born; and yet the Eaſe is very different and unequal. And this teaches us a ſhort way to that felicity we now ſpeak of, to wit, That we compoſe our ſelves to ſuch a ſubmiſs and malleable temper, that Chriſt may come only to govern us as *ſheep*, not to be put to tame us as *Tygers*. Let us withdraw all ſupplies from our *luſts*, and not by any ſecret

secret reserved affection give them clancular aids to maintain their *Rebellion*, and then they will not be able long to make any *vigorous opposition*, nor consequently much to disturb the *tranquillity* of those who have thus resign'd themselves to the government of the *Prince of peace*: and if this cannot be done in such an instant, but that there will be some previous displacencies, and uneasie struglings, yet even those like the *Scorpion* carry *Antidote* against their own *stings*, when 'tis consider'd, that they are but the *pangs* of the *new birth*, they will become very supportable by the expectation of that joy to which they tend. An enslaved people think themselves fairly advanc'd to happiness, if they can get but to make head against their oppressors, though they must expect many sore *conflicts* and sharp *engagements* before they become *Victors*: and certainly 'tis matter of inestimable joy to him, who has been under that sad spiritual slavery, to be set thus upon even terms, with his sword in his hand against those, who once had him in such vassalage, that he durst not lift up a thought against them; but especially when 'tis remembred with what *invincible aids* he is backt, such as will ascertain him of *victory* if he do not treacherously defeat himself. And surely he must be of a strange *phlegmatick temper*, whom all these considerations will not enliven, convey into him so much spirit as to make an attempt, and engage him to do that upon so pressing, so great a concern which mere curiosity prompts men daily to in common affairs. And he that is not moulded of this cold and stubborn clay, he that has not lost one of the *elements* of mans composition, and has but a *spark* of *fire* in his temper, will surely have some *warmth* towards this so inviting an *experiment*: and when he has once made it, I doubt not, it will then joyn with the suffrages both of reason and conscience in approbation of *Christs Laws*, and will with *Solomon* pronounce of this spiritual wisdom, *her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, Prov.* 3: 17.

AND now it must be a strange *violence* of impiety, that must break this *threefold cord*, that shall disannul the joynt *sentence* of all that are competent *Judges* in this matter. This is not the strength of *Sampson* that *brake withs and cords*, but of the *Legion* that *pull'd in pieces fetters and chains*; and though too many men make it their *own work*; yet certainly 'tis only the

the *Devils intereſt*: he aſpires to the rule and government of us; and to that end nothing can be more contributive, than theſe prejudices we take up againſt Chriſts conduct. A *Soul* like a *Nation*, can neither bear *two Legiſlators*, nor be without *one*: and *Satan* having but that ſingle competitor, our quarrelling with Chriſts Laws, is virtually an embracing of his. When we ſend *Chriſt* that rebellious meſſage; *Nolumus hunc regnare*, we ſay to the other as the *trees* to the *bramble*, *Judg.* 9: 14. *come thou and reign over us.* And to this defiance of the one, and invitation of his oppoſite, he very nearly approaches, that thus defames Chriſts commands as irrational or ſevere. The traduceing of a government being, we know, the immediate *præludium* to the caſting it off; *libelling* the forlorn hope to rebellion. But would God men would ſoberly weigh whither ſuch a mutinous humor tends; and when our outward *condition* has given us ſo many pregnant and coſtly *proofs* of its ruinous *effects*, take caution that it make not the like wrack within us: that we do not madly exchange Chriſts *gentle ſervice*, and *glorious rewards*, for Satans *cruel bondage*, and crueller Wages: the *golden chains* of the one which do more adorn than tie us, for the *Iron*, the *Adamantine* link of the other, which bind us till they deliver us over to thoſe *Chains of darkneſs*, where our captivity ſhall be irreverſible. If this ſo reaſonable, ſo neceſſary a care may be admitted; 'twill certainly confute the profane *ſophiſtry* of our age, ſilence our impious *cavils*, and inſtead of providing us of the colour of an auſtere *Maſter* to excuſe our *ſloth*, will engage us to that *diligence* that ſhall ſuperſede the uſe of ſuch *ſhifts*, and then we may hope to ſee *Chriſtianity* have a *Reſurrection-day* again, aſſume a Body ſomewhat of ſolidity and ſubſtance; which now wanders about like a *ghoſt* or *ſpectre*, a *ſhade* or vaniſhing *apparition*, which leaves no footſteps behind it: and to the re-union, O let us all emulouſly contribute, take up every one of us his dry *bones*, and bring them to the *Prophet*, or rather to *Him* who ſpake by that Prophet, to breath upon them, till at laſt they be cemented and inſpirited in active *duty*, to ſhew forth the *Praiſes of that God who hath call'd us out of darkneſs into his marvellous light*, 1 Pet. 2: 9.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Partial Obedience.

ANOTHER ſort of prepoſterous Conſiderers there are, by whom the *power and force of Chriſtianity* is no leſs obſtructed: and thoſe are they that contrive not how they may moſt *comply* with *it*, but how they may beſt bend it to *comport* with *them*. That rebate its edge, or turn it only againſt ſuch of their corruptions as they have leaſt kindneſs for. That weigh the *precepts* with no other deſign but that of taking the *lighteſt*: Thoſe to which their conſtitutions or other circumſtances carry leaſt repugnance; and come unto the *Goſpel* not as to a *Law*, but to a *Market*; cheapen what they beſt like, and leave the reſt for other cuſtomers.

THAT thus it is with many, needs no other proof than the variety viſible in the lives of ſeveral profeſſors. *One* man behaves himſelf *modeſtly*, and tells you his *religion* commands him *humility*; yet at the ſame time tranſgreſſes the as ſtrict precept of Juſtice, and will defraud him he bows to. On the contrary *another* is Juſt, but inſolent, and though his Sentence do not bend, expects his *Clients* ſhould. That man owns the purity of his religion in *viſiting the fatherleſs and widows*, yet diſclaims it again, by not *keeping himſelf unſpotted of the world*. This perſon is Abſtemious, but Uncharitable, will drink no *wine*, but thirſt for *bloud*. He prays much, yet curſes more; whileſt he is meek, but indevout. Now while the Rule is one and the ſame, how ſhould it come, that mens Practices ſhould ſo vary, were it not for the unequal Application? did they take it intire, though there might be difference in the *degrees*, yet ſure not in the *kinds* of their Virtues, and as men would not differ ſo from one another, ſo neither would they from themſelves; there would be then no ſuch thing as a *charitable* Drunkard, a *devout* Oppreſſor, a *chaſt* Miſer; *Monſters* engendred by this unnatural commixture of *light* with *darkneſs*; but *piety* would be uniform and extenſive, and *bring into captivity every thought unto the obedience of Chriſt*, 2 *Cor.* 10: 5. And till it be thus,

Chriſtia-

Christianity can never be thought to have atchiev'd any part of its design, which was not aim'd against any one *single limb*, but against the *whole body* of sin. Alas! 'tis not the lopping off one of the remote *members*, that will render the remaining ones any whit the less vital; the having a *part* less to animate, will rather serve to concenter the spirits, and make them more active in the rest: as we see the *pruning* of Trees makes them more *prolifick*. And this effect is very obvious among men: he who has no general dislike to vice, if he repudiate *one*, 'tis commonly that he may cleave closer to *another*; and what he defaulks from some *dry*, *insipid* sin, is but to make up a *Benjamins* Mess for some other more gustful. If the Wanton be *sober*, 'tis odds he thinks *excess* a Rival to his *lust*; if the Proud man be *liberal*, 'tis because *covetousness* is inglorious; such unevennesses are caus'd not by an *unkindness* to any Sin (unless possibly that aversion which natural constitution raises in some) but by a *partiality* to one or more favourite-Vices, for whose better *accommodation*, and *securer reign*, not only Virtue, but other Vices also must give place.

AND this 'tis much to be fear'd will upon a true account, be found to be the *summ* of many mens *piety*, something they think they must pay to the *importunity* of their Religion, which upbraids them so loudly, that they are willing to *stop its mouth*, but yet would do it with as much *frugality*, and good managery as may be, and so consider what 'tis they can best spare; what refuse Sin which brings them in little of satisfaction, and is perhaps in composition with some other more agreeable: and *this* they can be content to devote to the *slaughter*, set it to receive all the *impressions of the sword of the spirit*; and so use it as a *buckler* to their *darling lusts*, to ward off those blows which must else fall heavy on them; but alas! this is not to *obey*, but to *delude*; to ransom a *greater* Sin with a *less*, and to transcribe in this matter the Counsel of *Caiaphas*: to *let one die for the people, that the whole nation perish not*. To make one forlorn guilt a Patriot to the rest, whilst in the *tempest* which threatned a general *shipwrack*, the *precious wares* are preserv'd, by throwing the *less valuable* over-board.

AND truly that is commonly the event; men are so jolly and triumphant when they have worsted a *trivial inconsiderable sin*, as if they had defeated the *whole army*: this poor despicable

spoil

spoil is set up as their *Trophy*, and must, they think, witness for them both to God and man, that they are *good Souldiers of Jesus Christ*: they can, like *Saul*, with full confidence meet the *Prophet*, and tell him they have *fulfilled the commandment of the Lord*, 1 *Sam.* 15: 13. though *Agag* and the best *Cattle*, the reigning and fattest *sins* be spar'd: and while they are thus secure, their sins will certainly be so also, have no disturbance or disquiet from them, but lie at ease and rest, feed like *Canibals* upon their own kind, be nourisht by the carkasses of those unlucky vices, on whom the exterminating lot hapned to fall; and by that means grow to a prodigious bulk and corpulency. And upon these terms *Satan* himself will allow us to *mortifie some sins*, nay will himself *cast the first stone at them*: and like a rooking *gamester*, purposely lose these *petty stakes*, that he may afterwards sweep the *board*.

FOR if men should give themselves up universally to *all sorts* of Ill, if they should set themselves in a total opposition to *all the documents* of their *profession*, he would lose one of his most useful *engins*; there could be no such thing as a false delusive hope, they might possibly by obstinacy *harden*, or by diversion *gag* Conscience, but they could not bribe and corrupt it, make it sit down well pleas'd and satisfied with it self. For when the *threats* against disobedience shall occur to the mind of one who has in all instances disobey'd, 'tis impossible he should find any *salve*, any way of evading the Thrusts, they make so directly at him: but he who can alledge for himself that he *obeys in some things*, confronts that to all Objections, and resolves he is not *in the list* of the *disobedient*: One or two such comfortable instances are as mighty, as God promis'd the *Israelites* should be, *Deut.* 32: 30. *One able to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight*; all fears and misgiving thoughts are dissipated and fled before them: and as once the *French King* in his return to the numerous swelling titles of the *Spaniard*, thought the bare repetition of *France*, *France*, *France*, was a full ballance to them all; so when *whole files* of great and scandalous Crimes present themselves, *one single virtue* is thought a sufficient counterpoize. He whose Conscience upbraids him with all Profaneness towards *God*, and Insobriety towards *himself*; yet if he can but answer, that he is *just to his neighbour*, he thinks he has *quit scores*, and fears no farther reckon-

reckonings: he who is immerſt in all the *filthineſs* both of *fleſh and ſpirit*, has abandon'd his Mind to *pride and envy*, his Body to *luſt and intemperance*; and ſo ſacrificed both thoſe to *Devils*: yet if he caſt but *ſome grains* of his eſtate upon the Altar; devote any *ſmall part* of that to God, for the uſes of *Piety* or *Charity*; he concludes that *Incenſe* will ſend up a Cloud thick enough to obſcure the other from the *eyes* of Divine Juſtice, and yield ſo ſweet a ſavour, as will perfume him in ſpight of all that Noiſomneſs: ſo extending old *Tobits* words beyond his meaning, that *alms, though alone, delivereth from death, and cleanſeth from all ſin.* He who is deep in *ſacriledge* and *rebellion*, that can daringly ſwallow repeated deliberate *perjuries*; yet if he can get but the demure tenderneſs, to *fear a ſudden oath*, he is *Chymiſt* enough to extract a *confidence* out of that *fear*, and preſumes that *formal* Civility to Gods name, ſhall expiate all the *real* Violations and Contempts of him: and while men make ſuch uſe of their *partial peace-meal* obedience, it can never be the *Devils intereſt* to diſturb them *in* it, to awake them *out* of their pleaſant dream, or to exact *of* them to depoſite thoſe poor unſignificant *remains* of their Chriſtianity, which ſerve only to make them more *Supine*, not more *Safe*.

NAY, indeed his affairs are ſo ſtated, that to ſome he can and does, and without danger allow a yet far *greater indulgence*; he can permit them to bid much fairer than this for Heaven, and yet knows the purchaſe is far from being made; he can ſee them caſhier not ſome one *ſingle ſin*, but *whole troops* together, and yet not fear the ſinking of his Cauſe: He can truſt them ſo far, that as the *young man* in the Goſpel, they may be pronounc'd, *Not far from the Kingdom of God*: yet as long as there is but *one* unmortified Luſt, that can ſend them away *ſad from Chriſt*, his tenure is firm enough. *Herod may hear John Baptiſt gladly*, nay do many things upon it, yet let him but keep *Herodias*, and ſhe will ſoon be able to ſecure both *her ſelf* and *Satan* againſt the danger of that Competition. This is indeed his main advantage, that he can hold faſt by the *ſmalleſt thred*; and whereas to our bliſs a conſpiration and union of all Vertues is required; our *ruine* can ſpring from any *one* ſolitary Crime: *many rounds* make that Ladder wherewith we muſt ſcale *Heaven*: whereas *one ſtep* ſerves to precipitate us into the *Abyſſe*;

Abyſſe; ſo ſadly verifying the Poetical Axiom, *Facilis deſcenſus Averni*. In ſumm, while there is but *any one ſingle ſin* indulg'd to, that is the *Devils tedder*; and though it ſhould be imagin'd ſo looſe, as to give men ſcope to range over *all other ſorts* of Virtues, to taſte the ſweet and feed liberally on them; yet ſtill the *beaſt* is in the power of him who has fixt the line, not only to be finally led away to *ſlaughter*, but alſo to have the *length ſhortned*, and be either put out of the *reach*, or quite removed from the *view* of thoſe *pleaſant paſtures*.

FOR though the ſecurity rais'd by ſuch an ununiform piety is in many ſo exactly apportioned to *Satans intereſt*, that he has no cauſe to wiſh the change of his tenure; yet where the circumſtances are ſuch, as will make it uſeful, he can eaſily twiſt his *thred* into a *Cable*. When he thinks one *Monarch* Luſt too mild a regiment, he can ſet up an *Athenian* Tyranny, or which is yet worſe, let in the whole *populacy* of Sin upon the Soul, which like the *Ægyptian Locuſts* ſhall overrun and devour it, *not leave any green thing on the ground*, and that this is in his power we have too much reaſon to conclude. He is, we know, a cunning *ſophiſter*, and if he has abus'd us ſo far as to impoſe *one* ſin upon us, he may thence very regularly deduce *many more*; as *one* falſe Premiſe admitted, may be improved into *thouſands* of falſe Concluſions. Indeed ſuppoſing a man reſolute to adhere to one ſin, he may with very good *Logick* perſwade him to multitudes of others. There are but two *Objections* uſually made to any Temptation; either the *offence*, or the *danger*; and theſe are uſually objectable to one ſin as well as to another: ſo that this *dilemma* readily offers it ſelf: Either it is reaſonable to buy a *pleaſure* at that price, or it is not: If it be, then contrive that the *crime* be pleaſant, and that brings its *diſpenſation* with it: If it be not, then why doſt thou live in this one ſin in deſpight of both guilt and puniſhment? The *latter* part of the Dilemma 'tis no part of Satans buſineſs to preſs; but the *former* he has too much advantage of purſuing ſucceſsfully; if he can but dreſs up a temptation to look invitingly, the buſineſs is done. So ridiculous a thing is an *uneven Piety*, that even laughs it ſelf out of countenance, and wants only temptation to become *uniform Vice*. How abſurdly looks it, to ſee a man run away with *Joſeph* from the embraces of his *Miſtreſs*,

Miſtreſs, and yet with full as great a ſpeed accompany *Gehazi* in the purſuit of a *bribe*; and how obvious is it to conclude that the former aſſault was improſperous only becauſe not manag'd with the *right weapon*; that he might have been *hir'd*, that would not be *wooed*? What a *mockery* is it for a man to be *zealous for God*, and *rebellious againſt his King*? As in the reverſe, for a man to be *true to his King*, and a *rebel to his God*? And who can but think, that had either of the averted *Crimes* been cookt to their *Palats*, they might have chang'd *Meſſes*? Indeed 'tis not imaginable by what rules of diſcourſe, he that embraces *one ſin* ſhould reject *another*: if it be done only upon *phancy* and *humor*, as the *repulſt vice* will have reaſon to complain of great *partiality*, when as bad as it ſelf is receiv'd and cheriſh'd; ſo it points out a way to attacque him more proſperouſly: let it ſhape it ſelf to the phancy; and ſure *Satan*, who can *transform himſelf to an Angel of light*, can ſoon work that eaſie *change*: let the *younger* Brother get on the cloaths of the favourite *Eſau*, transform it ſelf into the ſhape and intereſt of the darling ſin, and it need not doubt of a free *admiſſion*. But all this while to pretend *conſcience* for ſuch an *abſtinence*, is of all other pleas the moſt abſurd; for why ſhould he ſcruple at one, that abandons himſelf to another? As *S. James* argues concerning the *guilt*, ſo may we for the *act* of Sin: He that ſaid, *Do not commit adultery*, ſaid alſo, *Do not kill*; and 'tis abuſive mockery, the Souldiers *Ave Rex*, to bow to his *authority* in the *one*, and reſiſt it in the *other*. Thus unhappy is the caſe of him who entertains one ſin, his encloſure is broken down, and he's a common for all: he is left deſtitute of a reply to any temptation, and like a *baſhful* perſon, will be in danger of *yielding*, becauſe he is aſham'd to *deny*: and this I doubt not, many have found experimentally true; ſome ſins have been committed not ſo much upon the force of inclination, as to be conſentaneous to themſelves, to ſilence the upbraidings of their underſtandings for acting ſo unevenly, it being impoſſible to give a reaſonable account, why *this* and not *that*, or *that*; for when by *one bold wilful ſin* a man is enter'd into a *ſtate of hoſtility* with God, 'tis not a *tenderneſs in all others* will make up the *breach*: and then they think the rule of known enemies takes place, where all civilities are diſclaim'd, and the quarrel manag'd to the moſt advantage. The reſolv'd *Adulterer* could perhaps without much difficulty be

juſt;

luſt; but when he conſiders that that one *Helena* of his will certainly make a war, he thinks 'tis an impertinent *niceneſs* to loſe a good prize, or diſmiſs his *covetouſneſs* while he reſolves to retain his *luſt*. The incorrigible *drunkard* could perchance eaſily enough be *chaſte*, but when he remembers that *drunkenneſs excludes him from the Kingdom of Heaven*: having made that ſale of his eternal inheritance, he thinks 'tis but good husbandry to get as much as he can for it: So *treacherous a gueſt* is any *one Sin* admitted, and lodg'd in the heart, it deſpoils it of all its armour of defence, leaves it nothing wherewith to guard it ſelf againſt any aſſailant; and be it *never ſo ſmall* a one, 'tis like thoſe *little thieves*, which being put in at the window, ſet the doors open to all the reſt.

BUT perhaps this *danger* may be thought in ſome degree warded by the *natural temper* and conſtitution of men, which neceſſarily renders them unapt to *contradictory vices*, and ſo will ſecure them at leaſt from ſo many as are diſagreeable to their Temper: but if this ſhould be granted, yet it confeſſedly leaves them open to all others, and that were certainly bad enough: he that is as *wicked*, as his *complexion* cannot only encline, but permit him to be, will not want much of the utmoſt number of ſins: but whatever we can ſuppoſe that to ſtrike off from the tale; yet in the ſecond place, 'tis very much to be fear'd, that will defaulk nothing of the weight, he that ſins to the height of his *appetite*, perhaps *power*, ſhall he be ever the more *innocent*, becauſe there were ſome *naufeated ſins*, which he had not Self-denial enough to commit? God abſolves us in proportion to the *rectitude* of our Wills, not the *niceneſs* of our Complexions: he that wills to purſue whatever he can find *guſtful*, how impious ſoever; ſhall it be *virtue* in him that ſome Sins are *unſavoury* and diſagreeing to his *Palate*? If it ſhould, there may ſo many extrinſick things be by Analogy brought in, either to ſwell or abate the accounts of our ſin, that we ſhall be much to ſeek in the eſtimate of it.

BUT in the third place even theſe very averſions are no infallible preſervative; for if they happen to be more moderate and remiſs, than the love of ſome other ſin; that *predominant inclination* will ſubdue thoſe *diſlikes*, when ever its *intereſt* is to be ſerv'd by thoſe otherwiſe not *guſtful commiſſions*. There is nothing more ordinary than to ſee one appetite purſued to the violation

violation of another. A man perhaps hates *drunkenneſs*, not only as a *beſtial* but *uneaſie vice*; yet if his *love* to Gain exceed his *diſlike* to that; when that is requiſite to make up the price of a *good bargain*, that *averſion* muſt ſtoop, and give way. A man deſpiſes *ſwearing* as an *inſipid impertinent ſin*; yet if he ſet any great value upon *being in the mode*, and complying with the *gentile Dialect*, that will ſoon debaſe him to what he ſo much contemn'd: and truly there is ſcarce any other account to be given of that great and fooliſh ſin. But in no other inſtance is this ſo notoriouſly viſible, as in that of *duelling*. I need not ſingle out any one mans particular *inclination*; the nature of mankind doth certainly avert both killing and being kill'd: yet when that *Phantaſm*, that *Chimæra* honour, has once poſſeſt the mind, no reluctance of humanity is able to make head againſt it; but it commands as uncontroul'dly, as the *Centurion* in the Goſpel, *ſays to this man go and he goes, to another come and he comes*: nay as tyrannically as the great *Cham* of *Tartary*, who as an Eſſay of his Soveraignty *commands whole troops to ride down precipices*; nay theſe Averſions are not only thus violently ſubdued by ſome foreign *luſt*, but are many times deſtroy'd even by *force* of that very *vicious principle* which gave them *birth*; for we miſtake if we think they are always vertuous, or ſo much as innocently founded; Vice is often at civil wars with it ſelf; and the vehement *inclination* to one, ingenders a *diſplacency* to another; but yet ſuch a *riddle* is this *myſtery of Iniquity*, that upon the very ſame *baſis* is built both the *abhorrence* and *commiſſion* of the ſame Sin. For *example*, a Proud man as much hates to *fawn* and *flatter others*, as he loves to be flatter'd himſelf; yet let his *pride* but once work the other way, and ſet him upon an *ambitious project*, then all the mean condeſcenſions imaginable are with eaſe digeſted, he can crouch and proſtrate, and as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, *ſail down and humble himſelf*, that by that deſcent he may rebound to the height he aims at: but ſtill pride is the common cauſe of theſe ſo diſtant effects. In like manner the Riotous Prodigal deteſts *coveteouſneſs*, looks upon it as ſo ſordid and baſe, that he brands even *prudent frugality* as approaching too near it; yet let him but once find the *ſprings* to grow dry which ſhould feed his *luxury*; when he feels his Riot begins to exhauſt and prey upon it ſelf,

then

then even that *despised Covetousness* shall be call'd in to its aid, to dig *metal* for the Furnace to melt, and so by a strange *Antiperistasis*, *prodigality* shall beget *rapin*. Thus unhappily *prolifick* is every Sin, that it carries in its bowels the *seed* and *principle* even of those that seem the most *Heterogeneous*; and then how shall a man that has admitted but any one such teeming lust be secur'd that it shall not thus propagate, till his *Soul* become a mere *desart*, fill'd with all sorts of *wild* and *noxious creatures*.

THERE is but *one hope* imaginable to interpose, and that is that *Gods grace* shall prevent this exorbitant *growth of impiety* in him, and I acknowledge that is sufficient to do it, where it may have its kindly *operation*; but where it has so, it will uniformly suppress *all sin*, and therefore where *any one* continues in force and vigour, 'tis manifest that *operation* of Grace is obstructed, and such a man I should desire soberly to consider what assurance he has, that he who has so evacuated Gods grace in one instance, shall not do so in another? If *in spight* of that grace he can be lustful, why shall he not be as able to resist it *in favour* of Drunkenness, Sacriledge, Rebellion, or any other crime to which he shall at any time have appetite? Can he imagine that God sends forth an irresistible strength against some sins, whilst in others he permits men a power of repelling his *Grace*? that were to transcribe the *Syrians* absurd Phanse, that he is *a God of the hills and not of the valleys*: No certainly, he who has his own unhappy experience to attest the possibility of frustrating the Divine succours in one particular, has too sure grounds to infer the like in others. Nay alas, it does not only infer it by way of *argument* and *deduction*, but it is very apt to produce it by way of *cause* and *efficiency*: We gain a readiness to any thing by custom and assuefaction, and he who has habitually oppos'd *Grace* in the defence of a *Lust*, has deliver'd himself from that modesty which makes the first defiance uneasie, and so runs on with ease and boldness to future resistance. It fares with men in this violation of *Gods grace*, as it does in that of his *Patrimony*, the first Sacriledge is look't on with some horror, and men are fain to devise *arguments* and colours to delude their reluctateing *Consciences*; but when they have once made the breach, their scrupulosity soon retires; one draught of that *impious*

gain, has ſuch a *ſtupifying effect*, that they can without check ſwallow on, till the Sin flame ſo fiercely, that nothing but mere want of Matter can extinguiſh it. But admit it were poſſible for a man to be ſecur'd of his own compliance with ſome part of reſtraining grace whileſt he impugnes it in others, yet who ſhall aſcertain him of that grace? It being Gods, implies 'tis not in our power, he may ſurely do what he will with his own, and though his *promiſe* has made a ſure *entail* of it to all thoſe, who *humbly ſeek* and *diligently uſe* it: yet it no where engages that it ſhall be the *portion* of any other; much leſs that it ſhall importunately and endleſly renew its aſſaults on thoſe who have often repulſt and put it to flight: In that caſe *Gods reſolution* concerning the *old world*, becomes appliable, *My ſpirit ſhall not always ſtrive with man*, and *Chriſt* who forbids us to *caſt our pearls before Swine*, will certainly never proſtitute what is infinitely more precious, his *Grace* to thoſe, who have ſo long trampled it under their feet; and ſo thoſe muſt be concluded to have done, who have perſevered in any one ſin; for Grace is uniformly oppoſite to all, and therefore the cleaving to any is defiance and affront to it. But we need not the help of inferences and deduction, the threats of God are expreſs in this matter: The *Talent* is decreed to be taken from the *unprofitable ſervant*, who has not employed it to the proper uſe, and ſuch infallibly is *every man* who has not actuated the *Grace* given him to the ſubduing of every *reigning ſin*; and the *reprobate mind* mention'd in Scripture as the moſt diſmal of all Plagues, the νὸς ἀδόκιμος, which yields not to the melting and the purging force of Fire, and therefore does conſign to that of Hell, is founded upon the voluntary rejection of God in particular inſtances, *Rom.* 1. How then can he, that in any one ſingle thing ſo rejects him, aſſure himſelf that ſhall not be the event of it? That he who would not have Chriſt rule entirely in his *heart*, ſhall at once be put out of his *government* and *protection*? have all thoſe ſpiritual aids withdrawn, which ſhould either aſſiſt him to *good*, or fortifie him againſt *ill*; and like an out-law'd perſon be expos'd to the outrage of all that will aſſault him.

AND now would God this might be ſadly pondered, that men would not be their own *Sirens*, and entertain themſelves with thoſe deceitful *melodies*, which will end in *howlings and gnaſhings of teeth*; that they would not think their having

ſome

some few vertues, and but some few vices will serve to satisfie the design, or procure them the rewards of their Christianity: for if they should continue in this posture, and not be tempted to grow worse, they may certainly conclude, 'tis because Satan finds they need not. And can they be *proud* of that Virtue which the Devil himself will allow them? And think themselves *good* enough when they are as bad as he wishes them? But even in this they have no other tenure than his Will. When he pleases for his interest, or even for his divertisement and recreation, he may hurry them to all that is most enormous; convert their *Hypocrisie* to *prophaneness*, their *partial* Piety to *universal* Ungodliness; they have nothing to interpose in their own Defence, not so much as a reasonable argument to oppose to him, they have made a voluntary sale of themselves for one or more beloved sin, and now as his *vassals* he may impose on them what others he pleases: and by their doting affection to their *Rachel*, take advantage also to obtrude the despis'd *Leah* upon them. And how wretched, how deploreable is this state? What a *Piety* is this that we must owe to the *Devil*, while we can be no better than he will let us?

YET this is without *Hyperbole*, the condition of every man that is not sincerely uniformly Christian; every indulg'd sin gives *Satan* livery and seisin of his heart, and a power to dispose of it as he pleases. I know men are apt to flatter themselves with other hopes, and think that those obediences they pay to God shall like a pre-ingagement disannul all after contracts made by guilt, and put them into the possession of Him who is able to *bind* that *strong man*. But God will not be accessary to such a fraud, even towards the Devil; while they keep the price, enjoy that pleasure or profit wherewith he bought them, God will never interpose to defeat him of his purchase.

AND as God will not thus forcibly wrest them out of his hands, much less will he descend to a capitulation and composition with him. *God is a jealous God*, and what *jealous husband* did ever by compact divide his right with the *Adulterer*? Where he finds a persevering disloyalty he gives a bill of divorce and disclaims his relation. Yet so besotted are men, as to hope God will ratifie that alienation they have made of one part of their heart, and contentedly enjoy the rest; and as competitors use sometimes to do, share with his Rival. But alas!

that immortal quarrel will not be thus taken up, the difference between theſe irreconcilable *Antagoniſts* will not be ſo compromiſed. God diſdains ſuch a treaty, nor will ever come ſo much as to an interview with his enemy, within the liſts and receſſes of one Heart. And while men labour ſuch an accord, they are but combining with *Satan* againſt *God* and their own *Souls*: he knows well, that while he holds any part, God will have none, and ſo the whole falls to him, and then he may very ſafely be modeſt, and demand but moderately, and by that ſeeming difference and yielding, gain more than by all his moſt eager contendings. I ſuppoſe every man will diſown the having this ridiculous deſign of compounding the ſtriſe between *Heaven* and *Hell*; but certainly it is the natural interpretation of ſuch partial obediences; when two *Litigants* contend for ſomething which I have in my keeping, if I divide it between them, is it not obvious to conclude I deſire to compoſe the diſpute and ſatisfie both parties, and is not this the very caſe here? 'Tis true indeed, it carries a very abſurd ſound, but then how more abſurd is it for men to act at ſuch a rate, that when 'tis repreſented to them in the trueſt colours, themſelves are aſhamed to own what they have done? And this calls loudly upon them to put themſelves out of the laſh of their own diſcipline; to recover ſuch an innocence that they may not be forc'd with *David* to ſentence themſelves, when that their crimes appear in the light diſguiſe of a *Parable*.

AND this indeed is the only proper uſe of all theſe conſiderations, the danger and folly are as *unuſeful* as *unpleaſant* ſpeculations, unleſs it be in order to the reforming that wherein both are founded. Let them conſider themſelves, as engaged in thoſe wild projects which even themſelves look on with ſcorn: as enſnar'd in that unhappy contract which has rendred them part of the *Devils* poſſeſſion, and contrive how they may obliterate that reproach, and diſintangle their Mortgag'd Souls.

AND for this there is but one way imaginable; and that is by quitting their hands of that which they took as the valuable conſideration in that mad bargain; reſtoring *Satans* coyn to him, not only *principal* but *uſe* alſo: caſting away the main ſin and all the little appendages, which like off-ſets have ſhot out from that root; retaining nothing that has his mark and impreſs

impreſs upon it, that ſo he may not pretend to any thing of theirs by right of barter or exchange. This, and this only is the way to diſſeiſe him of his Eſtate, to cancel thoſe fatal Indentures which bound them to him, and till this be done, as long as they keep any part of his *wages of Iniquity*, his title remains in full force, they are ſtill his *ſervants*, his *vaſſals*.

EVEN the *redemption of Chriſt* has no efficacy towards the enfranchizing of ſuch; for though it proclaim an univerſal *Jubilee*, yet it forces liberty upon none; he that will nail his Ear to the door-poſt and deſie a manumiſſion, may continue his ſlaviſh life ſtill, and indeed though Chriſts death was deſign'd to reſcue us from the power of Satan; yet the firſt eſſay of that reſcue was to redeem us from our vain converſation: And where that is not done, which is ſo eſſentially fundamental to all the reſt, 'tis not poſſible any other part of that Redemption ſhould be atchiev'd, unleſs we will confound that order of *Nature* as well as *Grace*, and make the *conſequent* precede the *antecedent*.

LET no man therefore upon any vain hopes delay the one only expedient to his ſecurity, but pay back the *earneſt penny* he has received from *Satan*, fling away his *ſin*, how pleaſant or profitable ſoever, with the greateſt Abhorrence, as knowing 'tis the *price of blood*, and that not only his *Saviours*, but his *own* too; and this immediately, leſt the forfeiture be irreverſible. We know the danger of lapſing time in caſe of Mortgage, but here our danger is greater, becauſe the time is ſo uncertain; for though God had nothing elſe to do in the whole tranſaction ('twas wholly our own work) yet 'tis he that aſſigns the time of forfeiture: he alone knows how far we may go in ſin, before we paſs the poſſibility of a retreat; how long he will be provok'd before he ſuffer his whole diſpleaſure to ariſe; and how many repellings of his Grace, and quenchings of his Spirit they are, to which his deſertions are apportion'd. *Pharaohs* heart was hardned by God after the *eighth reſiſtance*, and we have no ſecurity but ours may be *ſooner*, yet if that ſhould be taken as the ſtanding meaſure, how dreadful an abode would it make to many of us? Who is there that has eſpouſed any one *beloved ſin*, that has not much oftner repeated the *acts* of it, every one of which is a reſiſtance and contumacy againſt God? Who is there that has not done it

againſt ſo many expreſs warnings and loud calls of God in his own *Conſcience*? Which renders it yet a fuller *parallel*, and 'tis to be fear'd, too many agree with it even in the laſt and higheſt circumſtance, that of the *Plagues* too by an obſtinate perſiſting after ſo many *Judgements* ſent to mollifie and reclaim them; and then where the *premiſes* are the ſame, 'tis too likely the *concluſion* may be ſo alſo.

I SHALL not wiſh any Perſon ſo ſtrictly to apply this caſe, as to conclude, that he is already in this ſtate, but I could wiſh all men would apply it ſo far, as to infer how *poſſible*, nay how *probable* it is, that the very next reſiſtance ſhall put them in it. 'Tis not *Pharaohs* being a *Heathen* and they *Chriſtians* that will give them any ſecurity; it being no part of the Goſpel-Covenant, that men ſhall be ever the longer allowed to trample upon Grace. All the difference it makes is rather on the other ſide; the contempts are enhans'd to a higher guilt, and conſequently, the fewer acts may now ſerve to fill up the meaſure. And if their experience teſtifie to them, that in their particular God has us'd a greater long-ſuffering, than he has given any grounds to expect, if the guilt of their Conſciences teſtifie that they have committed many more acts; and yet ſome remaining tenderneſſes and regrets witneſs alſo, that they are not yet given up to an utter hardneſs and obduration, O let them not preſume themſelves ſafe, becauſe they are not utterly deſperate; but lay their hearts open to be ſtampt and impreſt by grace, before they grow utterly inflexible; timely conſider what is the deſign of this *longanimity*, and without any more ſtruglings and reſiſtance ſuffer it to attain its aim and *lead them to repentance*.

FOR though their Souls be not yet wholly petrified, yet how know they in what an inſtant that unhappy *Metamorphoſis* may be wrought; or if it ſhould not be ſo ſudden, yet 'tis certain every act of ſin makes gradual approaches towards it; ſo that if God ſhould not inflict it by way of *puniſhment*, yet the mere force of Habit would produce it by way of *natural efficacy*: And to be convinc'd of this, I ſhould require no more, but that men would reflect, and ſee what effects it has already wrought, how far it has advanc'd towards that fatal point. Let them ſend their thoughts back through every ſtage and period of their ſin, and obſerve whether as that has grown,

grown, so their tenderness and reluctance of Conscience has not abated and decreas'd: Let them but recollect what regrets and disquiets they had, when they ventur'd upon the first unlawful commission, and compare it with their present, and I doubt not they will discern a great inequality; they will find that every act of sin hath allayed somewhat of the sharpness of those pangs, and proportionably to the frequency of the repetition they approach toward insensible: and then let him whose older Habit has multiplied those *Acts*, sadly consider how few *steps* he has to the end of his unhappy journey, though no extrinsick concurrent should hasten his pace. But when Gods desertion shall, as for ought he knows it may the next minute supervene: that as a full and violent *Wind* drives him in an instant, not to the *Harbour*, but on the *Rock* where he will be irrecoverably split.

NOR let any man fortifie himself against these terrors, by hoping that his own *single* (perhaps small) sin shall not have this destructive force; for if it be *wilful* it carries in it that which is properly the *malignity* of all sin, to wit, a resistance and opposition against God, and this is so *mortal* a Venome, that the least Dose of it is *deadly*, as a man may as certainly be poison'd by a *dram of Arsenick*, as with the *largest draught*.

THE more natural inference lies the other way, if it be but a single or petty sin, 'tis so much the easier to part with; he that is bound with a *strong Cable*, or with a multitude of lesser Cords, may pretend some *necessity* of his Captivity, from the strength of his bonds; but he that is tied with *one slender string*, such as one resolute struggle would be sure to break: he is *prisoner* only to his own *sloth* or humor, and who will pity his *thraldom*, where 'tis so apparently his *choice*? Do not therefore say my sin is inconsiderable, and therefore I need not *relinquish* it; but my sin is inconsiderable, therefore I need not *keep* it. So slight a pleasure I may part with and find no miss: this pedling profit I may resign and 'twill be no breach in my Estate. And if *Christ* require a renunciation of *those sins* which are as the *Hand and Eye*, shall I scruple to depositе *those* which are but as the *Hair or Nails*?

NAY, he may yet argue higher, and from the smalness of the sin deduce the enhansement of the Guilt: great acqui-

sitions carry some temptation in their face, but despicable prizes do rather avert than tempt. 'Twas the sign of a *common harlot* to be *hired with a kid*, *Gen.* 38. and sure he must be of a strange prostitute Soul, that can adulterate for such low trivial wages. To dishonour God, though the *whole world* were to be acquir'd by it, were *great impiety*; but to do it for *handfuls of Barley* and *pieces of Bread*, *Ezek.* 13: 19. himself brands as a yet higher pitch. And sure it argues a very light esteem of God, when one poor contemptible lust shall be able to overpoize him in our hearts.

NOR is the *folly* less than the *profaneness*, when there is but one *Jonah* to be cast over-board, 'tis the greater madness to hazard a *wrack*; and let such a man pretend what he pleases in extenuation of his sin, make that appear never so minute and despicable, yet 'tis apparent all the love which other men scatter and distribute upon several, he has united and concentred in this one lust. The most *doting affection* when it is summed up can amount to no more than *this*, that it makes a man expose himself to the greatest *pain*, the greatest *loss* for the thing beloved. And this is most visible here, *Hell* is as certainly acquir'd, and *Heaven* as certainly forfeited by *one* sin as *many*; and then though there may be odds in other respects, yet what is there in this, between this more *modest* and the most *licentious* Sinner, but that the *former* puts the same value upon one, that the *other* does upon many sins, and sells his Soul so much the cheaper.

AND now would God such men would review their *bargain*, soberly consider what there is in this *Idoliz'd sin* of theirs, which should exact such *costly sacrifices*. Let him whose long intimacy and experience has given him access to its most secret recesses, that has rifled its bowels, and knows the utmost whether of pleasure or profit that lies there conceal'd: Let him I say, that is thus qualified for it, make an exact inventory of its wealth, and then let him compare it with what he is to pay for it; weigh its flat and *momentary Pleasures*, with those most transcending and *perpetual Joys* which are *at Gods right hand*; its base and perishing commodities, with those unfailing treasures in Heaven; and then judge of his purchase in respect of that part of his price: And if that be not convincement enough, let him weigh the other also: those sad *pains* which

which are too *intolerable* to be suffer'd, and yet so *eternal*, that they can never cease to be suffer'd, and think whether that be not too dear a rate for that pleasure, whose gust is so little, and whose duration is less: or what *profit* he will have in the revenue of his sin, that *Gold and Silver* which will finally *eat his flesh as it were fire*, *Jac.* 5: 3. and prove the unhappy *fuel of his flames*.

FROM all these *premisses*, certainly Reason and Religion do equally infer the same *conclusion*, to wit, that men should not tolerate themselves one minute in any known sin of how small a size soever it be; nor so impertinently betray their Souls to ruine for that which they call light and trivial; and is so indeed in respect of the *acquest*, but overwhelmingly ponderous in regard of the *effects* and pernicious consequents. And O that mens practices might evince them to have made this just deduction, that those who have in many things preserv'd an *innocence*, would not be so ill husbands as to forfeit all the *advantage* of that Care for want of extending it a little further, not suffer the whiter parts of their Soul to be discolour'd or tinctted by the reflection of one crimson sin; but rather let their tears wash that into a whiteness, that they may be uniform and of a piece. For though *Jacob* clad his darling *Joseph* in a party-colour'd garment; yet God owns none either for favourite-*Son*, or so much as *Servant*, that he sinds so arrayed. The *followers of the Lamb* are all clad in *white*, and in that attire we must be sure to put our selves, if we mean to go in with him to the *marriage*. And since the Gospel is the invitation to that feast, let none imagine he has complied with it till he have thus fitted himself: till then he affronts and *baffles* his Christianity, sends it away empty without its errand; nay, which is worse, *prostitutes* and profanes it, makes it serve only for a *Gourd*, that he may sit under the shadow of it, and commit his sins the more undisturbed; but let him remember that he is all this while breeding that *worm*, which will smite this *Gourd*, and leave him unsheltered to that scorching *wrath* of God, which will make the improvement of *Jonahs* passionate wish, that God would take away his life, his most rational Desire; render not Death only, but Annihilation also as *eligible*, as it will be *Impossible*.

each sin

CHAP. VII.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Miſtakes concerning Repentance.

AN OTHER dangerous Underminer of Chriſtian Practice is the many affected miſtakes in the buſineſs of *Repentance*. Men look upon that as the grand *recipe* of the Goſpel, and infallible *Catholicon* againſt all their ſpiritual *maladies*; and ſo far they judge right, for ſo indeed it is. But when they proceed to compound this ſoveraign *Medicine* for their own uſe, they do it moſt deceitfully; leave out the principal and moſt operative *ingredients*: and by being ſuch ill *Apothecaries*, defame the Goſpel as the *Diſpenſatory*, and *Chriſt* as the *Phyſician*, and likewiſe ruine themſelves as the *Patients*. But of thoſe who make this imperfect and defective *compoſition*, all do it not alike; ſome leave out one part, ſome another, and ſome ſo many, that they retain nothing of its ſubſtance and reality: Eat out all the *heart* and vertue of it, and leave only an empty *ſhell*, the gilding, as it were, of the *Pill*, the Form and mere outſide of *Repentance*.

IN this latter rank I place thoſe who ſuffer *repentance* to paſs no farther than their Frontiers, and Out-works, aſſign it its quarters in the *ſuperficies* of the man the *Face*, or *Tongue*, or *Geſture*; but if it attempt to penetrate any deeper, if it ſend but one ſerious thought to alarm the heart, then like the *Edomites* againſt *Iſrael*, *Num.* 20. all the forces are muſtered to impede its paſſage; ſuch *formal* Penitents as theſe all ages have produc'd. Chriſt tells us of thoſe who *diſfigur'd their faces*, *Matth.* 6: 16. put on, as it were, a vizard only to act this part: and *Eſai* 58: 5. long before deſcribes them, by the *bowing down the head like a Bul-ruſh*, and certainly the race of them is not worn out in our days; a demure or rather a lugubrious *look*, a ſad or whining *tone*, makes up, 'tis to be fear'd, the *ſumm* of many mens Humiliations. Nay as the World has of late gone, that in lone were but a modeſt pretence: ſuch theatrical *forms* ſtickle inward for the *prize*, not of that one part, but of all religion: a

diſtorted

distorted countenance is made the Mark of an *upright heart*, and none is thought to speak the Language of *Canaan*, that dresses it not in an uncouth sound: and then what wonder is it, that they are impatient others should *worship God*, as *David* invites, *in the beauty*, while themselves chuse to do it, in the Deformity *of holiness*.

BUT others make somewhat a fairer advance towards *repentance*, by taking in some of those things which are indeed its *necessary concomitants*; of this kind is in the first place *confession of Sin*: and this after some sort is stuck at by few; no man who hath not herded himself with the worst sort of *Fanaticks*, imagines himself sinless, or pretends to be thought so by others, but will very readily acknowledge to all the world that he is a *sinner*: and as to *men*, so especially and more solemnly to *God*. Every man that but offers at praying at all, thinks Confession a necessary Branch of his devotion: all publick *forms* have ever carried that in the *front*, as supposing it the most principal, universal, and daily requisite to the lapsing state of humane corruption: And perhaps 'tis the general innate perswasion of this, that hath secured that part of our *Liturgie*, from those impertinent cavils, which have particularly aim'd at most other members of it. And I suppose this is as frequent in the *Closet* as in the *Church*: the only fear is, that there it is as loose and general too: that those private and particular guilts which are neither fit nor possible to be distinctly inserted in *publick*, do many times lose their place even in *private* Confessions also. The shortness and the ease of general forms being very likely to recommend them to those whose numerous sins threaten too great a length, and whose confus'd snarld consciences render it difficult, thus to pull out thred by thred: but where *Sins* are thus moulded up in a *lump*, they will like great *masses of Pills* or Confections keep the more undecay'd, retain more of their *strength* and *vigour*. So that *such* Confessions are very indulgent to *Satans interest*, who fears not the impressions that can be made upon him, while his *body* remains entire: the great execution then beginning when 'tis broken and scatter'd, and each sin is singled out for a particular pursuit: and where that is not attempted, the war can never be successful, nor thought in earnest.

BUT suppose this be done; and by exact enumeration each

ſin is parted from its fellows, as when a *conqueror* purſues the *flying troops* of routed Enemies: yet if this be all, if *quarter* be allowed, and any mercy given, no *real prize* is gain'd by this atchievement. He who recounts his ſins with milder purpoſe towards them than utter exciſion, he makes no approach towards the eſſential part of Repentance. He may bring out large *Catalogues* of his ſins, and call them *confeſſions*; but he may better expreſs his own ſence, if he term them rather *inventories* of his goods, for ſuch 'tis apparent he reckons them, whilſt he reſolves to keep them. Indeed there is not a more abſurd piece of *Pageantry*, than theſe *formal* Confeſſions, and ſuch as ſhews how little *God* is conſider'd in his great Attribute, *the ſearcher of hearts*. 'Tis certain no man would hope to attone an offended ſuperior, by a ſubmiſs acknowledgement of his fault, did he know that his purpoſe of reiterating it were diſcern'd: and what a tacite *blaſphemy* is it then, to treat *God* at ſuch a rate, as preſumes him as *deceivable* as a poor *Mortal*; and ſure this were a ſtrange Ingredient in *repentance*. We look on it as a high pitch of impiety boaſtingly to avow our ſins, and it deſerves to be conſider'd whether this kind of confeſſing them have not ſome affinity with it. Should I tell a man I have injur'd and provok'd you thus and thus, and ſo I reſolve to do again at the next opportunity: I refer it to common conſtruction whether this were not to *juſtifie*, not retract the unkindneſs. Now what I ſuppoſe thus ſaid to man, is in the ſecret purpoſe of our heart, no leſs articulately ſpoken to God, who needs not our words to diſcern our meaning. Therefore whoever intends to *repeat* his ſins, nay does not ſeriouſly intend to *forſake* them, does in truth maintain and defend his vicious practice, how loudly ſoever his Tongue accuſes it. And ſuch *clamors* are but like the feign'd Quarrels of combin'd *cheats*, in order to delude ſome third perſon. But alas, the ſcene is here unluckily laid, for God will not be mock'd, nor will the *Mercy* promis'd to him that confeſſeth and *forſaketh*, ever reach him that confeſſeth and *retaineth*. Confeſſion is no farther acceptable than as it either flows from, or tends to beget an abhorrence of Sin, and abſtracted from thoſe qualifications it becomes loathſome and diſtaſtful to God. Alas, can we think our *Hiſtorical* vein ſo pleaſant; that he ſhall be delighted with the *narrative* of

thoſe

those crimes, whose perpetration he detested? Can it be *Intense* in his nostrils, to have our *Dunghils* displayed? Or can his pure eyes be gratified with such polluted prospects? True indeed, he gladly descends to all this as a *Physician*; nauseates not our *foulest ulcers*, when we bring them for *cure*: but when like *beggars* we make them openly our form of address, and dread nothing more than their *healing*; certainly their View will only excite his *indignation*, not his pity. And this, 'tis to be fear'd, abodes sadly to many of us; 'tis our vulgar Objection to the *Romanist*, that they make their confessions contributive rather to their *confidence* than to their *reformation*: what their share is in that guilt, I shall not here examine, but I may too truly pronounce they have not enclos'd it; that black circle of Sin and *confess*, Confess and *sin*, encompasses as well *Protestants* as *Papists*; if possibly not quite so many, the cause 'tis doubtful is (what we need not boast) not that More of us confess *aright*, but that Fewer confess *at all*. But of those that do, if we may but cross examine, and interrogate their *actions* against their *words*, these will soon confess (and that not *auricularly*, but in a loud and audible voice) the *invalidity* of their solemnest Confessions. When we see a man that *yesterday* kept a Humiliation, *to day* trampling on the necks, invading the possessions of his Brethren, we need no other proof how vainly and unprofitably, if not how hypocritically and provokingly he confessed his Pride, or Covetousness: and the like we may infer when we see any man persevere in any gross wilful sin. And of such, God knows, there are such multitudes, as will give us instances more than enough, how wide a difference there is, between a *mere Confitent* and a *true Penitent*.

BUT in the next place, a *passionate regret* at Sin, a *grief* and *sadness* at its Memory, more speciously pretends to enter us into Gods roll of *Mourners*: Sorrow has (in vulgar acceptation) so engrost the whole notion of repentance, that men are apt to secure themselves, that the Wind of a penitential *Sigh* is so mighty, as will blow away the guilt of the most mountainous *Sin*: that if they have but *wept* a little upon their crimes, they have quite *extinguish'd* the wrath they kindled: but alas these are vain dreams, *God* who *delights not to grieve the children of men*, does not project for our sorrow,

but our innocence; and would never have invited us to the one, but as an expedient to the other. 'Tis natural even to mere *Animals* to ſhun that by which they have ſmarted, and therefore ſorrow for ſin is a very proper means to avert our appetite from it: but if we have learnt the unhappy skill of ſeparating the *effect* from the *cauſe*; if our Grief abate not our Love; if we can caſt kind looks at our ſins, even through thoſe Tears wherewith our Eyes are glas'd, this will ſure be as far from accompliſhing our deſign, as Gods: leave us equally unpardon'd, as unreform'd.

NAY alas, ſuch Sorrows as theſe will rather ſerve to *enhanſe* than *expiate* our guilts; they are loud witneſſes againſt us, that we know the malignity of thoſe ſins we commit; that we have poiz'd them, and find them as a *talent of lead* upon our Souls, and yet prefer them before Chriſts *light burthen*: that we have out-vied that perverſe Election wherewith *Elihu* charges *Job*, and choſen *affliction* rather than *innocence*, *Job* 36: 21. and though we have felt the *gnawing of the Worm*, yet ſtill reſolve to cheriſh it, till it gains its woful Concomitant of *unquenchable fire*; and ſure this reſolvedneſs, this high *fortitude* in Sin, can with no reaſon be imagin'd a preparative to its remiſſion, 'twill rather ſerve to liſt us among Satans *Martyrs*, than Gods *Penitents*.

AND indeed if we examine the original of this kind of Sorrow, what is there that can with any face pretend to an acceptation? Alas! 'tis apparent there is no diſlike to the ſin; for the natural effect of that, would be the abandoning it. If I have fall'n into the mire, common reaſon directs me, not to ſit down and cry that I am ſo defiled; but to cleanſe and waſh my ſelf, and beware of ſuch another miſadventure. Now Gods enmity is purely with the ſin: and if we think to contract a league with him; we muſt eſpouſe his quarrel, hate what he hates: But in this caſe 'tis quite otherwiſe, we diſlike only the *conſequence*, not the *crime*; are diſſatisfied to ſee that what is ſo pleaſant, will not be ſafe: deteſt thoſe temporal or eternal miſeries, which God has annext to it: which is upon the matter to grieve not becauſe we are *guilty*, but God is *juſt*: and to avert only that part of the *evil*, of which he owns to be the author, that of *Puniſhment*; whilſt that of *Sin*, as our own creature, we dandle and careſs. And can we think it ſufficient

to

to atone an incenſed Majeſty, that we love our own eaſe, while yet we love our ſin ſo much better? Is it a *vertue* to have ſome ineffective regrets to damnation, and ſuch a Vertue too, as ſhall ſerve to ballance all our vices? This were indeed a compendious courſe to block up Hell gates, and leave none a poſſibility of ever getting thither, but thoſe who ſcaled the wall and deſperately reſolved to poſſeſs themſelves of that place of *Torment*. But alas, they are other *fruits* of Repentance that muſt *deliver* us *from the wrath to come*: for though I deny not, that the *apprehenſion* of Danger is extremely both reaſonable and uſeful, yet 'tis only by way of *preparative*: 'tis like the *Tromper* that gives the *Alarm*, and ſets us to the *battel*, but it muſt not pretend to be like thoſe of *Gideon* that atchiev'd the whole victory. To ſee our *danger*, may occaſion, but does not cauſe, or neceſſarily infer an *eſcape*. I may madly leap into that pit which I ſee gaping to ſwallow me, and then my *foreſight* ſerves only to render me my own *murderer*. In ſhort, if that formidable aſpect of our Sins, make us run from them, it has done us the happieſt office; *plucks us*, as *S. Jude* ſays, *out of the fire*: but if our love be ſo doting, as to counter-charm our fear, if we be ſo bewitcht with the *deceitfulneſs of ſin*, that we will have its Embraces, though we know them *deadly*; if we weep that we have ſinn'd and yet go on to ſin; our wilful *Guilt* will defile our *Tears*, but our tears will never cleanſe our guilt. We only aſſiſt in the judicature againſt our ſelves; and to Gods condemnation add our own: and what we call our Penitence, becomes a ſad Atteſtation of our Incorrigibleneſs.

AND as this *mere Sorrow* will never avail, ſo neither will a *partial* and *imperfect reformation*, and that whether it be defective in reſpect of the *kind*, or of the *duration*: to the former we have ſpoken elſewhere, and ſhall not neeed to repeat: but of the latter there will need no leſs caution; men being apt to obtrude fallacies on themſelves in this as much as in the other. Every tranſient *gleam* of Piety is concluded to be that *flame* in which the Holy Ghoſt deſcended, and though it want the main circumſtance of reſting on them, yet ſerves to perſonate the Comforter. He that whilſt the foreneſs of his late pangs of *conſcience* remains, finds himſelf a little indiſpos'd for a new career in ſin, preſently concludes *repentance* hath had its perfect work in him, made that *change* and tranſmutation, which

which certainly denominates him a *new creature*, and pronounces his *vicious appetites extinct* and *mortified*: when alas they are but ſtrew'd over with a little *penitential Aſhes*, and will as ſoon as they meet with *combuſtible matter*, any apt temptation, *flame out* as fierce as ever; And God knows the event does too often actually atteſt this, after all the ablutions, and purification of their repentance, their next work is to diveſt themſelves of their white robe, and thoſe whom yeſterday you ſaw in the *laver*, to day you ſhall find wallowing in the *mire*: and as with far the more *guilt*, ſo ſometimes with much the greater *confidence*, for having been ſo waſht: yet ſo ſtrongly are ſome mens phancies poſſeſt with their imaginary purity, that they are the laſt that take notice how the ſcene is chang'd: they comfort themſelves, that ſin and they have had ſome little *skirmiſhes*, though but preparatory to a cloſer *league*; that they had fixt good purpoſes, though there remain nothing viſible but their violation; and ſo will call themſelves Chriſts *Sheep*, though their notorious impurities witneſs them to belong only to that *herd* into which the *Legion* entred.

THIS is a deceit which one would think ſhould immediately detect it ſelf, but 'tis ſtrange to ſee, how our *wiſhes* can preſcribe to our *faith*; and what a more than omnipotent power our ſelf-love has in reconciling contradictions: yet I can ſcarce think this innate ſtrength of corruption had been ſufficient for the purpoſe, had it not had the auxiliary aid of ſome commodious doctrines. My preſent deſign is ſo far from controverſial, that I am loth to point out any to which I muſt expreſs unkindneſs: yet upon this occaſion, I ſhall refer it to conſideration, whether that method which has been us'd to quiet *ſome* Conſciences, be not very apt to ſtupifie *more*. When I ſee one who from his preſent reigning ſins, regularly infers the illneſs of his ſtate; that is yet by his Caſuiſt diverted from that proſpect, and bid look back to ſee, whether no part of his life afforded any Evidence of true Grace; and if he can but remember any ſuch time, is warranted to make that his *Epocha*, from whence to date his *infallible aſſurance*; is told that that *immortal ſeed*, though it may be covered, yet cannot be choaked; but will moſt certainly ſpring up unto *Eternal life*: When, I ſay, I ſee this eaſie remedy preſcrib'd to his fears,

fears, 'twill be obvious for me to compound my self an *Antidote* from the same *Ingredients*: to fix my Eye upon some *mark* of Regeneration which at some time or other, I either have, or phancied to have had upon me, and with the stedfast beholding of that, as of the *brazen Serpent*, be fortified against all the *venome of my fiery lusts*: Cast in this one stick, and with it sweeten all the waters of *Marah*, secure me against all the bitter effects of my present guilts. How fatal an influence such discoursings as these are apt to have on practice, is too obvious both in the cause and effect: I need not examine the authority of that grand Principle on which they are founded; since if that were admitted, yet it will not justifie the beforemention'd Superstructure: for suppose it receiv'd as an infallible truth, that grace if true can never be lost: yet 'tis by the confession of all, so easie to be deceiv'd in judging what is so, and our partialities to our selves are so likely to betray us to that deceit; that these *Corollaries* men deduce thence for their personal assurance, can never partake of the suppos'd infallibility of those premisses they derive from, and consequently are much too slight a *basis* for men to trust with so great a *weight*, as in that of their *present comfort* and *future state*.

SEVERAL other pernicious emprs there are in the matter of *Repentance* which men fall into (shall I say, or rather aspire to; make it their ambition to be under their covert and patronage, and with extreme Violence to their *reason* as well as *religion*, climb up to those castles in the air, and there fortifie themselves impregnably against all the sacred Artillery of Divine threats. Their *false confidences* serve them as *feather-beds*, not only to sleep securely in, but to *dead all bullets* that are shot against them. But of all those deceitful *refuges*, there is none more treacherous, and yet more confidently and universally resorted to, than that of *Repentance in reversion*, to commence no body knows when, some months or years hence, when this business is dispatcht, that lust satiated; or indeed to bear the same date (if not a later) with their last Will and Testament. This is that unhappy retreat to which *thousands fly* as the routed *Syrians* to *Aphek*, 1 *Kings* 20: 30. till they are entomb'd in that *wall*, whose shelter they solicited: How desperate the hazard of such procrastation is, hath been so convincingly demonstrated by better Pens; that *trumpet* hath been blowed so loud

loud by all our ſpiritual *watchmen*, that there remains nothing ſeaſonable, but to wonder whence men have got that *Lethe* which ſecures them their ſleep in ſpight of that *Alarm*: and certainly 'tis matter of the greateſt aſtoniſhment to obſerve the ſtupid, yet common boldneſs of men, who ſo fearleſly expoſe themſelves to this moſt formidable of perils; who yet in things of far leſs danger and lighter conſequence are ſo nicely timorous, that no ſecurity is thought enough, every the remoteſt danger to their outward concerns, excites their preſent vigilance to avert it: but here that order is moſt abſurdly inverted, and the *preſent imminent danger* is aſſign'd and put off to their *future care*. Let the *Phyſician* tell them he obſerves ſome Symptomes of a latent *Malady*, ſome aptitudes or firſt Cauſes of a *Diſeaſe*; what haſte is there made to meet that Enemy *in the frontiers*, before it advance too far? All Arts of prevention are us'd, and ſuch uneaſie *remedies* ſubmitted to, as perhaps out-bid the *pain* of the Diſeaſe. In like manner let a *Lawyer* tell them he has ſpied ſome defect in an *entail*, which may perhaps in the next age give ſome interruption to their deſign of having their houſes endure for ever, *Pſal.* 47. how ſolicitous are they to repair that *error*, and leave nothing to the mercy of a *Law-quirk*? And in both caſes thank the vigilant care of their informer that gave them notice of their danger: But let the *Divine* tell them he ſees their Souls languiſhing under the moſt mortal diſeaſes; that they have actually forfeited their *inheritance* in the land of the living, they can hear it unconcernedly; ſay, or at leaſt think thoſe cares are to be remitted to *Felix* his more convenient ſeaſon, that when their *Bodies* are as infirm as their *Souls*, then care may be taken for both together. That 'tis enough for their *ſpiritual* Life to commence, when the *natural* is expiring, and then to provide for *everlaſting* Habitations, when they are putting off their *Earthly* Tabernacle: as for the thanks they give their *Monitor*, 'tis generally the ſame that *S. Paul* received from the *Galatians*, to count him their *enemy for telling them the Truth*, *Gal.* 4: 16. but alas he has no reaſon to reſent the injury, ſince 'tis but the ſame they offer to their neareſt and moſt intimate friend, that *Angel guardian* which God and Nature has placed within their own breaſts, I mean their *Conſcience*: let that at any time whiſper the ſame admonition, and immediately they cry out as *Ahab* to *Eliah*, *Haſt thou found me O my enemy?*

nemy? All arts are us'd to convey themſelves out of its Reach, Buſineſs, or Company, or Drink, or any thing is ſolicited to come in to their reſcue, that in that throng they may deceive its purſuit, or at leaſt in that louder noiſe drown its voice; and is not this to look on it as their Enemy, while they ſhun it as a *Malefactor* does the *Officer*? yet I appeal to the breaſts of thoſe, who lean upon the broken Reed of a late *Repentance*, whether this be not the caſe with them: let me tell them whether they dare truſt themſelves alone with their *Conſcience*, give it opportunity of ſpeaking freely to them, of having before them the mad adventure they make of their precious *Souls*; which they do not only expoſe to as many hazards of a *ſwift damnation*, as there are accidents which may ſurprize their *bodies* with a *ſudden death*; but do beſides by this reſiſtance repel and quench that *Spirit*, without which they can never hope to effect that ſo neceſſary, ſo difficult a *work*; nay, I may, I fear, ask ſome of them, whether they have not ſo often ſhunned theſe parleys, that their *Conſciences* like an *abus'd Friend*, has at laſt given them over, ceaſt to purſue them with more of thoſe unwelcome importunities; and by its ſilence left them ſecur'd from all noiſe which may diſturb that treacherous ſleep into which they have lulled themſelves. To thoſe who are thus given up to the *ſpirit of ſlumber*, I cannot hope to ſpeak loud enough to rouze them; but to thoſe that are but of the former rank, that have not yet ſo proſper'd in their unkind deſign againſt themſelves, as quite to have alienated their boſom friend, that are yet within the reach of thoſe *amica verbera*, the ſtripes and reproofs of their own Conſcience; to ſuch I would addreſs with this moſt affectionate *petition*, that they would not ſeek to remove themſelves from that *wholſome diſcipline*; that they would not fly that *Chirurgeon* whoſe *Lancet* threatens none but the *impoſthumated parts*; but rather chuſe to be ſhewed the formidableneſs of their Danger, than by a blind embracing it, to periſh in it. And if they have but any general confus'd inclinations to this ſo reaſonable a requeſt, I ſhall then put on more ſolemnity, aſſume to come as an *Envoy* from thoſe dreaded Conſciences of theirs, to *mediate* an enterview, to propoſe the fixing ſome time of parley, and beſpeak their *patience* to hear it out: And let them but grant this, let them but dare to do ſo much in order to their own ſafety, and I can ſcarce think it poſſible they

ſhould

ſhould after retain that daring, which only tends to their ruine. In a word, let men ſeriouſly and attentively liſten to that *voice* within them, and they will certainly need no other *medium*, to convince them either of the error or danger of thus procraſtinating their *Repentance*, which themſelves acknowledge muſt not upon their utmoſt peril be finally omitted, and yet nothing but an immediate diſpatch can ſecure it ſhall not.

'TWILL be needleſs to deſcend to a particular view of more of theſe deceits, they will eaſily be detected by this one *general Rule*, that whatſoever falls ſhort of a preſent, univerſal permanent Change, falls as much ſhort of *Repentance*. All the pretences that are made upon any other ſcore are but as the Garments of the *elder brother*, put upon the back of the *younger*, which though they might delude a blind *Iſaac*, will never be able to deceive an all ſeeing *God*. All that remains is to offer to the Readers conſideration, how nearly he is concern'd to guard himſelf againſt all deluſions in this ſo important an affair. It was an ancient *Stratagem* of War to poiſon the Waters in an Enemies Camp, that ſo they may drink their own deaths: but *Satan* has here far out-vied that *Policy*. Were but our Nouriſhment infected, we had ſtill a recourſe left us to Medicine; but here he has envenom'd our very Phyſick, and what *cure* remains for thoſe whoſe very *remedies* are their *diſeaſe*? When that Bath which was deſign'd to cleanſe us, is it ſelf polluted, we may well cry out as *Dionyſius* of the corrupted River of *Alexandria*, πῶν γένοιτο ἂν πάντα καθαίσιον ὕδωρ τοῦτο ὕδωρ ἄλλο καθαίσιον, what Flood ſhall cleanſe theſe Waters? Where can we be ſecure, when our *Repentance* (which the Apoſtle, 2 *Tim.* 2: 26. ſuppoſes the Means of diſentangling us) is it ſelf become our Snare? This as it loudly proclaims our *danger*, ſo ſurely in all reaſon it ſhould awake our *care*, teach us not to ſuffer our ſelves to be abus'd with deluſive appearances and ſhadows of *Repentance*, leſt we finally find that *Ixion-like* we have embraced a Cloud. What an amazing defeat will it be to him, who preſumes his Tears have blotted out the *hand-writing* againſt him, to find the full bill brought in at the great Aſſize, and thoſe he call'd his *penitential ſorrows* here, to prove but the Prologue to that *Tragedy* which ends in *weeping and gnaſhing of teeth*! And therefore let every one

one timely provide against that fatal surprize, use this excellent receipt, not as a *Cosmetick* only to beautifie the face, give him some fair appearance to himself, but as *Medicine* to restore health; reduce him to such an *Athletick* vigorous Habit, as may evidence it self in all *vital* Actions, which will prove the best evidences in our last trial, where the inquisition will not be so much upon our Mouths or Eyes, as upon our Hands: not how many *confessions* we have made, or how many *tears* shed, but what *acts* of Vertue we have substituted in the room of our Vices: whether we have broken off our sins by *righteousness*, and our Iniquities by *shewing mercy to the Poor*; and without this 'tis infallibly certain, our Christianity will be as ineffectual to our *Bliss*, as it is to our *Piety*: if we will not permit it here to bring us to the *obedience* of Servants, it shall never instate us hereafter in the *inheritance* of Sons.

CHAP. VIII.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from Mistakes concerning Almighty God, and the methods of his Providence.

TO these Mistakes of our selves and interests, we have added others also concerning God, which are no less destructive to Christi in Practice, for as the *right knowledge of God is by our Saviour, Joh.* 17: 3. put as the Epitome and summ of all that leads to *bliss*, so our misprisions and misapprehensions of him, are no less remarkable for the contrary effects; for can we suppose it otherwise, when we remember that this is the grand work and *basis* of all Religion, & therefore if this *foundation* be deceitfully laid, the *superstructure* must necessarily sink and perish: and in this sence 'tis possible for us at once to build on the *Rock* and the *Sand* too; we may fix our faith intentionally on God, and yet by absurd notions and unwarranted conceits of him, defeat in the particulars what we establish'd in the gross; represent him so utterly distant from what he is, that under that disguise he will not much appear, either an encourager or rewarder of our *Piety*, & then we may guess how 'tis likely to flourish,

since

ſince the Apoſtle gives it as a *Fundamental Axiom*, Heb. 11: 6. That *he who comes to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them which diligently ſeek him.*

OF theſe miſtakes concerning God, there are divers; many more than the deſign'd brevity of this diſcourſe will admit me to examine. I ſhall only mention *three*, thoſe are, Firſt, concerning his *Decrees*, Secondly, his *Attributes*, Thirdly, his *Providence*.

BY his *Decrees*, I mean not thoſe ſtanding *rules* which he has in his Word ſet forth as the *meaſures* by which he will diſtribute rewards and puniſhments; but thoſe ſecret *purpoſes of his Will*, which he neither commands us to ſearch after, nor will permit us to know. That there are many Miſtakes concerning theſe, the numberleſs Diſputes that have been rais'd about them will ſufficiently atteſt, it being impoſſible for two Contradictory Opinions to be both *true*, though in things of this abſtruſe nature 'tis very poſſible both may be *falſe*. 'Tis not my purpoſe to wade into thoſe bottomleſs controverſies which like a Gulph have ſwallowed up ſo much time and induſtry of learned men: I ſhall only in *general* commend it to the Readers conſideration, whether it be probable, or indeed poſſible for thoſe Opinions to be *true* which infer *falſhood* in God? And then let the ſecond enquiry be, whether that be not too evidently the reſult of thoſe diſcourſes which ſet an Oppoſition between his *revealed* and his *ſecret* Will, his commands and his Decrees, making the one a blind for the better execution of the other? as if all the Tranſportation and Zeal he expreſſes *for* us, all the paſſionate enamouring invitations he makes *to* us, were only to ſport himſelf with our credulity: like the divertiſement of thoſe Men, who court them for Wives, whom they would abhor to marry: nay, as if all the proteſtations and moſt ſolemn oaths of God, were deſign'd but to advance the deluſion, and raiſe expectations, merely to defeat them. This is ſuch a ſevere ſort of *Irony*, as we would all think not only unkind but unjuſt in a man; and 'tis not poſſible that God, who appeals to us concerning the equality of his ways, ſhould fall ſhort of the ſtricteſt meaſures among us, or exemplifie to us an unſincerity he forbids us to follow.

HOW very inauſpicious influence ſuch *doctrines* are apt to have on *practice* is too viſible, for ſince 'tis as well the inſtinct as

is duty of our nature to aspire to an assimilation with God, even that most laudable and generous ambition shall by this means become our snare; for when *God* shall be thus misrepresented to us, drawn out by the black Lines, not only of *severity*, but *deceit*, rendred a Falsifier of his *Word*, nay *Oath*; 'twill give not only temptation but warrant to the like Practices: we shall easily swallow up all the particular commands of God, in that fundamental one of being like him; as we are taught himself has done both his commands and promises in his hidden Decrees. This is so natural a piece of *Logick*, that 'tis very unsafe men should be trusted with those *premisses* whence 'tis deriv'd. And though we are not over-apt to transcribe that Copy God does really set us, yet this spurious one will not miss to be taken out: that pravity of our nature which hinders in the one, exciting and spurring us on in the other. This is a way to reconcile our Vices with our reputation, and sin *cum Privilegio*; and there is little doubt of mens aptness to use that advantage; we see it in lower instances. The *Vices* of a Prince draw sholes of followers, when his *virtue* leaves him the more eminent, because single, and renders him rather revered than imitated: And certainly 'twas none of the Devils slightest *stratagems* on the *Gentile* world, to give them *such Gods* as might exemplifie to them all those *odious crimes*, wherein he desir'd to immerse them. Whether this may not be a *branch* of the same Illusion, I wish the Propugners of this doctrine would seriously consider.

AND as several *ills* are hereby countenanc'd and authoriz'd, so is all *virtue* in general discouraged and disheartned; this benums us in our Christian course, substracts that spirit and vigour, which should carry us through the weary stages of duty: indeed it cuts the very *sinews* of Industry, baffles and makes ridiculous all *purposes* of Labour; for what should invite a man to strive for that, from which he knows he is either irreversibly precluded, or else so infallibly ascertain'd of, that his negligence cannot defeat him? These are such *extremes* as afford no *middle*, wherein the virtue of industry may exist, hope being equally out-dated by the desperateness or unnecessariness of an undertaking: and how necessary hope is to excite endeavour we may learn of *S. Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 15:5. where he presses his *Corinthians* to the constancy of Christian Practice upon this ground,

ground, that their *labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.* But according to ſome mens doctrine, 'tis ſcarce poſſible for a man to know whether his labour be in vain or no; ſince the effect of it depends not upon the revealed *promiſe*, but ſecret *purpoſe* of God, and who knows whether there may not lie ſome *Dormant Decrees* againſt him, which when he thinks he has run his *race*, ſhall yet defeat him of his *Crown*. Whether a reward thus ſtated will much animate mens diligence, I may leave every man to judge by the like circumſtances in their ſecular concerns; and if they find they would there damp their courage, deſpirit and diſhearten them from attempting, there will be ſure more reaſon to conclude it in theſe *ſpiritual* Affairs, wherein our induſtry is commonly much leſs indefatigable.

BUT I ſhall not farther inſiſt on the ill conſequences of particular miſtakes; there is one *fundamental error*, which if it could be cured, would ſuperſede all the reſt; I mean our bold folly in *meddling with Gods Decrees*, which we call hidden, and yet ridiculouſly confute that Epithet by pretending to know them. This is ſo much an inſolence as forfeits the compariſon, which might belong to it as an error; we ſee *ſecular States* jealouſly reſerve their *private Counſels*; and ſhall we think God ſo ſcrutable, our ſelves ſo penetrating, that none of his ſecrets can eſcape us? Or if we think him, as indeed he is, *unfathomable*, why do we thus madly attempt what we confeſs *impoſſible*? Eſpecially ſince we ſhall not only loſe the thing we ſo vainly purſue, but others which we might elſe enjoy. 'Tis as if a man ſhould be ſo tranſported with a buſie earneſtneſs of knowing his Princes *Secrets*, as quite to forget his *Laws*, and incur capital puniſhment. God has given us *rules of life*, which upon the ſevereſt penalties he requires us to ſtudy and practiſe; and we divert from theſe, and make it our buſineſs to trace his *Counſels*. We are gazing at the *Stars* to read our deſtiny, and look not to our *feet*; and by that negligence experiment the worſt fate they could have portended: for I think we may ſay our wild *Phancies* about Gods Decrees, have in event reprobated more than thoſe *Decrees*, upon which they are ſo willing to charge their ruine, and have bid fair to the damning of many, whom thoſe left ſalvable. And indeed 'tis to be expected from Divine Juſtice, that ſuch bold Inquiſitors ſhould find

find nothing but their own Destruction. That Ark which devoutly reverenced brought *blessings*, when curiously pried into diffus'd *Pestilence* and *Death*, 1 *Sam.* 6: 19. Nay the very *Poets* will tell us, that if we will have *Prometheus* his Fire, we must take *Pandoras* Box also: and sure Industry cannot be worse laid out than thus to fetch home *Plagues*, and while so much of it runs waste to such unhappy purposes, 't is no wonder if we want for better; forget our *calling* by contemplating our *predestination*; and let the Opinion of our *fate* be at once the Encouragement and excuse of our *sloth*, than which nothing can more evacuate the purpose and design of our Christianity, which Divines have truly desin'd to be not a *contemplative* but *active* Science.

TO the same unhappy Effect concur our Mistakes of *Gods Attributes*, if I may call them Mistakes, which seem to be rather wilful Nescience, they being so delineated to us both in his Word and his Providences, that 'tis not want of light, but winking against it that must leave us ignorant. What the *speculative errors* are in this matter concerns not my present design to examine: but there seem to be some Misperswasions concerning the *Divine Attributes*, which do remarkably tend in their consequence and effect, to the corrupting *mens manners*; nay, look as if they were design'd, and affectedly chosen for that purpose; I mean, especially those concerning his *Justice* and *Mercy*, which being the *Attributes* in which we have the most immediate Concern, the Errors in them are the more noxious and destructive. Of this sort is that narrow scanty notion too many have of *Gods Justice*, which we measure not by *him* but *our selves*, and therefore proportion it not according to his *infinity*, but our own *concerns*. That is an Attribute from which we promise to our selves no advantage, and therefore we are willing to contract and shrink it up, make it serve only as a *Cypher* to advance *mercy*, but are unwilling to understand it in its proper Extent; think it a *word of form* put in to complete the greatness of Gods Style, rather than any *intrinsick part of his nature*, which he must deny himself to put off.

THUS do we sacrilegiously steal from God a part of his being, and while other Sacriledges invade only his *patrimony*, this commits a riot upon his very *nature*; yet as if we meant

the Proverb ſhould indemnifie us, and *Exchange* extinguiſh the *Robbery*, we add to another attribute what we have defaulkt from this, and amplifie and extend his *Mercy*, as much as we confine and limit his *Juſtice*; that is the one infinite Ocean, wherein not only we, but himſelf muſt be ſwallowed up. We will think of him under no other notion, nor allow him to be any other thing, but what ſhall be in ſubſerviency to this: we will have him Powerful to *relieve* our Diſtreſſes, but not to *revenge* our Crimes; Wiſe to *defeat* the machinations of our Enemies, but not to *circumvent* our own indirect or impious Policies; All ſeeing to *behold* our Wants and Griefs, but not to *diſcern* our cloſer Guilts; True to *perform* his Promiſes, but not his Threats. In ſhort, we model all that is in God to our own wiſhes; and inſtead of believing him what he is, phancy him what we would have him. Like *Micha*, *Judg.* 17: 5. *making us a God* for our own peculiar uſe, and forming the Deity we mean to worſhip. A ſtrange bold Inverſion, for Creatures thus to faſhion their Creator, put their own ſtamp or impreſs upon him, and ſhape him to their Phancies. And indeed 'tis nothing but *Phancy* that has to do in this Attempt, and accordingly it muſt vaniſh as the *operations* of that illuſive Faculty uſe to do. We may repreſent God to our ſelves as we pleaſe, but that has no more real *influence* on him, than a *deforming Optick-glaſs* has on the *Object* it diſguiſes, he is ſtill *the ſame* amidſt all our wild conceits of him, and will always make good the *title*, by which he delivered himſelf to *Moſes*, *Exod.* 3: 14. *I am that I am.* All that is in him is equally immenſe and infinite, his *mercy* need not invade his *juſtice* to gain it ſelf a larger field of action, which is already (as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks) *over all his works*; neither his *juſtice* encroach upon his *mercy*, that having alſo a Province wide enough; all impenitent ſinners being within its Verge, and God knows how much ſoever we ſtraiten it in our *opinions*, we do indeed too much extend it in its *real force*, by rendring our ſelves the proper objects of it. In ſhort, God who is the author of *order* and peace, cannot be ſuppos'd to be in *confuſion* within himſelf; the divine Attributes are not in *ſtrife*, but perfect *harmony*; 'tis we only that have rais'd this more than *Gigantick war*, not only *againſt* Heaven, but *in* it. The ſeveral *Luminaries* purſue the regular motions of

of the *Spheres*; but we confound at once the *Laws* of their Creation, and their *Author* too, ſtrive to eclipſe and darken *the Father of light*. But if the removing of an earthly Land-mark be a crime puniſhable both by God and man, what Thunder-bolts belong to thoſe who thus attempt to ſet new Boundaries to Heaven, to limit and meaſure out even the *divine Nature*, by the proportions of their own *Phancies*, and indeed ſuch temerity as this, is too like to confute it ſelf, and feel that Juſtice it will not believe; yet as great and daring a crime as it is, I fear there are few that can totally acquit themſelves of it: for though all diſavow it, yet he that ſhall narrowly ſearch his own heart, will ſcarce find it clear from all degrees of it: We are all apt to cheriſh a *flattering hope*, that God is not ſo ſevere as he is repreſented, or that if in reſpect of his Juſtice he be a *conſuming power*, yet that Mercy will be ſure to ſnatch us out of the *burning*; like the Angels to *Lot*, aſſiſt our Eſcapes, and provide us a *Zoar*, *that our Souls may live*: and this Hope though founded only in our *wiſhes*, is very apt to ſlide into our *faith*, and make us believe what we would have: by which means this becomes a kind of *Epidemick* Hereſie, the moſt frequent and common miſperſwaſion that occurs concerning the divine Attributes.

IT would be a work more long than uſeful to recite the ſeveral errors that have ſprung from this one. That of *Origen*, that *the Devils ſhould finally be ſaved*, is a noted and pregnant Inſtance, which could be deriv'd from nothing but this unequal apprehenſion of Gods Juſtice and Mercy: And beſides all other ancient, we have many branches of a later growth, that ſpring from the ſame root, a ſet of plauſible falſities, which would quench the *unquenchable Fire*, and kill the never *dying Worm*; I mean thoſe allaying ſoftning deſcriptions ſome of this age have made of Hell, ſome changing the *kind*, others abating the *intenſeneſs*, or at leaſt the *duration* of thoſe Torments, each ſubſtracting ſo much from this *Topher*, that they have left *Atheiſm* an eaſie task to take away the reſt: and may give ſuſpicion they mean to viſit that place, which they are ſo induſtrious to make eaſie.

BUT whatever they do *themſelves*, 'tis ſure this is the way to ſend *others* thither, to take off their fears of it, to make them think it not ſo dreadful a place as they once ſuppos'd,

and conſequently leſs careful to decline the ways that lead to it. 'Tis indeed too obvious that ſuch perſwaſions do mightily impugn Chriſtian Practice, and embolden men in ſin: And God knows we need no ſuch encouragement; the more general fallacious hopes of Mercy being too ſufficient for that purpoſe without theſe ſupernumerary deceits: but between the one and the other, *Libertiniſm* is like to out-grow all reſtraints, and the opinion of *Gods goodneſs* inſtead of *leading men to repentance*, will ſlacken thoſe reins wherewith our brutiſh Nature ſhould be bridled and reſtrain'd, and we thus left unto the ſway of luſt and paſſion, muſt run head-long upon ruine, *as the horſe ruſheth into the Battel.* For alas, we are not ſo *generous* as to do well for Virtues-ſake, nay nor ſo *provident* as to do it for Reward; 'tis our fear that is the moſt prevalent incentive, and accordingly we find Religion generally makes her firſt impreſſions there. They are *the terrors of the Lord* that do moſt uſually, and moſt effectually *perſwade men*, 2 *Corinth.* 5: 11. our Hearts muſt be pricked, and at thoſe Orifices piety enters. Now when all theſe terrors ſhall be ſuperſeded by the opinion of an overwhelming mercy, when *Hell* ſhall either be annihilated, or ſuppos'd ſo to annihiliate us, that we ſhall loſe our paſſiveneſs with our being, and be as uncapable of ſuffering, as even *Heaven* it ſelf can make us, what will be left to engage us to *virtue*, or deter us from *vice*? Alas, do we not often ſee a daring Luſt bid *battel* to all the Artillery of Heaven, meet *God* in his loudeſt Thunder, and venture on *damnation* in its dreadfulleſt form? And can we think it will be more modeſt, when it ſhall be told that they are only edgeleſs weapons it hath to encounter? That Gods Thunder amidſt all its noiſe carries no *bolt*? And that the Flames of the bottomleſs pit, are but a *painted fire*, that at a diſtance may fright, but not hurt us, or at leaſt ſo hurt us, that we ſhall not feel it? When thoſe rubs which fear interpos'd are thus removed, there is nothing to ſtay the courſe of head-long riot, but precipitiouſly it will on, where ever *ſtrong deſire* ſhall drive, or *flattering luſt* allure: he that loved his ſin, even when it threatned him *ruine*, ſerv'd it aſſiduouſly, when it promiſed no other wages than *death*, *Rom.* 6:23. how will he hug this *viper* when he thinks 'tis ſtingleſs, and give up his ear to be bored by that *Maſter*, which affords him preſent

sent pleasures without future stripes? We see even in Civil matters the *presumption* of Impunity is the great *nurse* of Disorders, and if it were not for the *coercive* power of Laws we should soon see how little the *directive* would signifie; and doubtless 'tis the same in spiritual or rather worse, by how much we are more bent upon the breaking of Gods Laws than mens, and consequently will be the more apprehensive of any Encouragement.

OF the truth hereof our experience gives too sad proof, none rushing so boldly upon Gods *justice*, as those who have most fortified themselves against the *dread* of it, as if they meant their *practice* should experiment the truth of their *speculation*, and make the utmost trial whether God can be provok'd or no. Indeed men use *mercy* as amaz'd Passengers sometimes do a *plank* in a shipwrack, lay so much weight upon it, as sinks both it and themselves; so perishing by too great a confidence of their rescue, and finding a *Gulph* where they expected an *Ark*: not that I suppose Mercy unable to support the weight of all the *Persons*, nay, and of all the *sins* in the World, which have not the one ponderous *adherent* of Impenitence superadded; but that is a burthen which even the divine *Clemency* sinks under, refuses to plead such a cause, and refers it to *Justice* as its proper Court: And therefore to sin on, in hope of mercy, is to undermine our selves, and commit a folly as absurd as ruinous; I wish I could say 'twere not also as frequent: but God knows 'tis every where too apparent; men openly avow it, so that 'tis become the vulgar answer to every convicting Reproof, that *God is merciful*: And surely they that observe the growth of vice, since our new descriptions of Hell came abroad, will have cause to think the one has had no small influence on the other, and that while some have made it borrow the uneasiness of our humane state to make up its torments; they have taken care it should be just, and lend us back sins of a greater magnitude. This miserable traffick have these Factors setled, between the present World and the infernal region, that Hell should have Earths *pains*, and Earth Hells *wickeaness*; the later alas we are too fully possest of, which is like to send too many souls to discover the deceit of the other. In fine, our groundless confidences of mercy, and those other *Chimæras* we forge out of that, are certainly the most frequent

and dangerous underminers of Chriſtian practice: theſe like the *Sun* give heat and vigour to thoſe inordinate luſts which a juſt *fear of vengeance* would as a winters froſt nip, and deſtroy: And till we lay by theſe eaſie ſlight thoughts of God, and conſider him in thoſe more awful attributes which exact our reverence, his *mercy* will only ſerve to ripen us for his judgement; that ſmooth and gentle property in God, which to all who abuſe it not is indeed the *oil of gladneſs*, will thus perverted acquire the more fatal quality of Oil, ſerve only to intend our *flames*, and remove us as far from the *rewards* of Piety, as our bold *phancies* have done from the *practice*.

A third ſort of miſtakes there are by which Piety is obſtructed, and thoſe are ſuch as concern *Gods providence*, about which the World has long ſince had many diſputes; ſome entirely denying it, as preſuming God ſo wholly taken up with the contemplation and enjoyment of his own felicity, that he is utterly inconſiderate of that of his creatures, and an unconcern'd *ſpectator* of humane affairs; others limiting and reſtraining it to thoſe things only which themſelves were pleas'd to think worthy of the divine inſpection and conduct: But theſe queſtions have been more bandied among *Philoſophers* and *Chriſtians*, and therefore are beyond our preſent enquiry. Yet give me leave by the way to expreſs my fears, that theſe errors have yet ſome ſecret rooting in too many hearts; that there are many who rather formally *ſay*, than cordially *believe*, that God governs the World, and diſpoſes as well of *humane* as *divine* things; a ſuſpicion that is rendred too probable by thoſe indirect arts men uſe, to poſſeſs themſelves of ſecular advantages; for did they ſeriouſly think, that all thoſe things are in Gods hands, from whence they are neither ſtrong nor cunning enough, either to wreſt or pilfer them, 'tis ſcarce imaginable they ſhould attempt ſuch painful impoſſibilities, diſquiet themſelves in vain, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, and which is worſe, forfeit all title to them as Gods gifts, by thus aſſuming to make them their own. But this is a diſquiſition I muſt leave every man to make in his own heart; only let me ſay, that he that has there any doubt of Gods univerſal or particular providence, has alſo in it the root of all *unchriſtian Sins*, of Diſtruſt, Solicitude, and Fraud: there being nothing that can effectually ſuperſede our own carkings and contrivances for our ſelves,

but

but the assurance that God cares for us. Men being still apt to scramble, where there is none from whom they expect an orderly and sufficient distribution, and therefore this error wherever it is found, may well be reckon'd among the impeders o Christian duty.

BUT besides those who thus doubt of Providence, there are others lyable to great mistakes, I mean those who to their *just belief* of Gods Providence, superadd a *groundless confidence* o f their own skill in fathoming it; that are not content to know it in its *product* and event, but pretend to discern it in its most secret *designments* and purposes; and do not so much *reverse* Gods dispensations, as *interpret* them. I do not here mean to condemn all *particular applications* of providential Events, which are sometimes so extraordinary and remarkable, that they are their own *expositors*, and point out the *construction* we are to make: and an humble advertence unto such, is not only innocent but necessary: but when men shall attempt to read every line in *Gods hand*, to make their own inference from every efflux of Providence; these pretenders to *divine Palmistry*, seem to differ only thus much from those who make a trade of the *natural*, that they Cheat *themselves* as well as *others*.

YET there want not some who have gone yet farther, and think not only to *understand* Providence, but *assist* it: not only trace it in all its intricate windings, and concealed *intendments*, but help it in the execution, and give birth to its *conceptions*: Of this sort especially are those, who having possest their brains with some conjectural expositions of obscure prophecies, will administer to providence, and call out those events they expect: and as if they were conscious that God would not make good their dreams, endeavour to do it themselves. This age has afforded too many instances of this, when the *fulfilling of Prophecies* has by some been made the solemn summons to *rebellion and bloud*: and in order to the *hating and destroying of the whore*, *Revel.* 17: 1. men have been animated to hate and destroy all who were not infected with their own Phrenzy. This we know has been call'd the *helping of the Lord against the mighty*, and something more than votive Curses awarded to those who refus'd to assist. Thus have they first wildly mistaken, and then no less wildly out-run Gods

deſigns: as if like *Baal*, *Judg.* 6. he were unable to plead for himſelf, to vindicate his own cauſe, or effect his purpoſes without their help: and having reſolved what he ſhall do, obtrude themſelves upon him as his inſtruments; how repugnant ſuch *anticipations* of Providence are to the *intereſts* of Chriſtianity is too apparent from the many *deteſtable effects* they have produc'd.

BUT ſetting aſide theſe, let us return to thoſe we ſpake of before; who preſuming to expound providential Events, make them the *Criterion* by which to judge both of *perſons* and of *cauſes*, concluding the one loved or hated, the other approved or diſallowed by God, according to their *proſperous* or *adverſe* Succeſs. The firſt of theſe was by our Saviour exploded, as an undue way of proceſs in the *Jews*, in the caſe of the *Galileans*, and before him *Solomon* had given it as a Maxim, that *no man could know love or hatred by all that is before him*, *Eccleſ.* 9: 1. And if under the *Jewiſh Oeconomy*, where temporal Bleſſings made up ſo great a part of their Promiſes, it was ſo; much more is it under the *Goſpel*, whoſe frame and compoſure is quite diſtant; which inſtead of propoſing ſecular proſperities to its *proſelytes*, aſſures them the contrary; ſets up the Croſs as the Standard under which they are to fight, and affords no temporal Hopes, but with an allaying *proviſo* of Perſecutions and afflictions; nay, the Apoſtle to the *Hebrews* goes farther, makes them not only *incident* but *neceſſary* to Chriſtians, the badge and cognizance of Sonſhip, whilſt the *no chaſtening* is the fatalleſt Sign, *a token of baſtardy* and abdication, *Heb.* 12: 7, 8. And doubtleſs the experience of every Chriſtian aſſerts the doctrine; we are all apt with the *Prodigal* to forſake our fathers houſe, and as long as we can have the riot and not the wants, ſhall never think of returning; we muſt be famiſht into conſideration, and our *huſks* alone will ſend us home to the *fatted Calf*. And can there be a greater indulgence in God, than thus to make our Iniquity our Puniſhment, that it may not be our Ruine? To embitter thoſe ſenſualities whoſe luſciouſneſs ſerves to intoxicate us, and to clip thoſe wings which he ſees carry us from him? Stories tell us that the *Trojan* Wives after the *deſtruction* of their Country, being wearied with their reſtleſs vagrant life, neceſſitated their Husbands to a *ſettlement* by *burning* their Ships.

And

And the same kind stratagem God has upon us: he sees that our worldly accessions do rather enlarge than fill our appetites, and carry us on to farther pursuits, and by drawing us still more from him the Center of rest, expose us to endless wandrings, and then what can be kinder than to rescue us from such a condition, that Curse of *Cain*, to be a *fugitive and a vagabond in the earth*: to deprive us of our treacherous prosperities, and fire those Ships wherein we are preparing like *Jonah*, to *flee from the presence of the Lord*; so by a happy necessity forcing us to fix our selves on him. And this is the worst God designs us in every adversity: and did we mean but as well to our selves, we should not miss of receiving the happiest Effects, even that *peaceable fruit of righteousness* the Apostle speaks of, *Heb.* 12. This holy men so well understood, that we find them dread nothing so much as an uninterrupted prosperity; they, like the *Muscovite* Women, grew jealous of Gods love when he forbare to strike; upon which score it is, that in the Ancient Fathers, there are so many solemn petitions for stripes; such importunate solicitations for the *medicinal corrections*, wherein they judg'd both Gods *kindness* and their own *safety* to consist.

AND then how perverse, how preposterous are our measures, when we conclude quite the other way, estimate *Gods love* only from *outward successes*, and think he is never angry but when he smites: a Perswasion, which as it is very false in its *grounds*, so very pernicious in its *effects*, and creates hopes and fears, as fallacious as it self. For first, if we apply it to our selves, it produces mischiefs proportionable to the divers states under which we are. If a man be *full* and *prosperous*, it makes him *proud* and *secure*, for when he has not only the possession of those things the World values, but takes them as an attestation of Gods peculiar kindness and approbation, what should make him either consider or reform his guilts? If he have sanctity enough to possess him of Gods favour, and all these profitable effects of it, he will not easily be perswaded he needs more: and any man that shall tell him he does, shall be heard with the same indignation wherewith *Crœsus* entertain'd *Solon*, when he found him question that happiness, which he expected he should have *admir'd*. Prosperity is in it self an emboldening thing, but when backt by this Opinion

of it, grows into all inſolence till at laſt it even recoil in the face of the Donor, and *dare* God by all thoſe enormous riots, to which it *enables Men*.

ON the other ſide, this opinion preſents a leſs *merry*, but not leſs *dangerous* Temptation to thoſe in adverſity; for when they ſhall look on *themſelves* only as the *Anvil* for Gods ſtrokes, they will be too apt to complete the *parallel* by anſwering it in *hardneſs* and inflexibility; have the αντιτυπον νου, as the Father calls it, which reverberates the blow on him that gave it. Perſevering wickedneſs is ſo naturally the iſſue of Deſperation, that we find the *Jews* take up the one merely to countenance the other, pretend *hopeleſneſs* to avoid *reformation*: Thus we find it, *Ezek.* 33: 10. *Our iniquities are upon us, and we pine away in them, how ſhould we live?* And again more plainly, *Jerem.* 18: 12. *There is no hope*, and then the inference is ready, *Let us walk every one in his own ways.* Endeavour is the child of hope, and we attempt not to attone one whom we conclude implacable: ſo that Wrath may *conſume*, but will never *melt* us; 'tis Love only that has that *ſoftning*, diſſolving Power, and unleſs we diſcern a mixture of that in Gods *inflictions*, they will never render us *malleable* to his *impreſſions*. We kiſs a fathers hand and rod, when an Executioners ſtroke we ſuffer rather than bear. *S. John* tells us *we love God becauſe he loved us*, 1 *John* 4: 19. I wiſh all men would make good the Inference; but 'tis ſure they are too apt to do it in the reverſe, and will hate if they apprehend themſelves hated; a ſtate which at once exemplifies, and anticipates the worſt part of *Hell* to us, yet very incident to thoſe who interpret every ſtroke of Gods, as the effect of enmity and utter averſion. This is to do that to our ſelves which the *Devils* ſo deprecate from Chriſt, to *torment us before our time*, it being peculiar to the vengeance of the other World to be merely punitive, that here being rather *diſcipline* than *vengeance*, deſign'd to reduce, not deſtroy us: and indeed beſides the *pain of ſenſe* which this Error creates, it does (to perfect the Hell) give that *of loſs* alſo; deprives us of one of the great Evangelical *felicities*, that of *rejoycing in Tribulations*, which our Saviour thought ſo conſiderable, as to inſert amongſt his Beatitudes: and his Apoſtles frequently mention it triumphantly as the great *priviledge* and *prerogative* of a Chri-

Christian. For if all adverse successes be a note of Gods disfavour, there will be no place for joy even in the most pious sufferings. *S. Stephens* ravishing prospect will be intercepted, and a *Martyrs* death be as uncomfortable as a *Malefactors*. But if these were the only sufferings to which joy were annext, there would be but too few concern'd in the deprivation; those wherein we are more universally interessed, are those Chastisements of God which our Guilts provoke; which though in respect of their *cause* they are Matters of the greatest sadness, yet in regard of their significancy and *effect*, they are Grounds of comfort; they signifie that God (however displeas'd) yet has not abandoned the care of us; thinks us worth his *correction*, and designs our *reducement*: and the effect will (if not obstructed by us) be answerable to that design: our *Chastening* here rescues us from the *sins*, and consequently the *condemnation of the world*, 1 *Cor.* 11:32. and this is sure no slight motive of rejoycing; and we are very unjust to God and our selves, if we will exchange it for the sullen murmurs of a desperate incorrigibleness.

AND as this perswasion is thus *pernicious* in reflexion on *our selves*, so neither is it more *innocent* when applied to *others*; for first, if we look on the men that prosper in the World, as the *Psalmist* speaks, *Psal.* 73:12. we shall too often find them answer the *character*, he gives them in the former part of the *Psalm*, and when from their temporal affluence we shall conclude Gods favour to them, 'twill be hard resisting the *temptation*, which (without that Argument) the *Psalmist* was under, of thinking it *vain to cleanse our hearts or wash our hands in innocency*. Nay, we shall be apt to joyn our suffrage to those in *Malachy* 3:15. and call the *proud*, *happy*: and if we esteem them so, 'tis natural to desire to be like them; so we shall quickly grow to despise a poor or *afflicted Innocence*, and embrace all thriving *prosperous sins*.

ON the other side, if we look on others in an adverse, calamitous state, this opinion suggests hard and severe sentences concerning them, inclines us to judge where we should succour, and how great an accumulation of Misery that is, we may learn from *Job*, whom we find not so often nor so passionately complaining of any of his *pressures*, as of the unkind *censures* of his Friends, who weighing in this deceitful balance

of temporal ſucceſſes, made very falſe judgements of him, and as if they were to Glean after Satan, endeavoured to deſpoil him of that only comfort his malice had left, the conſcience of his Innocency. This is, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, *to perſecute him whom God has ſmitten*, and *to talk to the grief of thoſe whom he hath wounded*; a thing repugnant to the common temper of humanity, and much more to that tenderneſs, thoſe affections and bowels Chriſtianity requires; and therefore in this reſpect alſo, we may reckon this perſwaſion very injurious to Chriſtian duty.

NOR is it leſs ſo when applied to *Cauſes*, in which it is full as deceitful a Rule as it is in *Perſons*: God has deſign'd us another meaſure of our undertakings; his *word* and *law*, by the general proportions whereof, we are to ſquare and accommodate our particular *actions*: he ſends us not to his *providence*, and the various diſtributions of that, or allows us to judge of the *Juſtice*, by the *Succeſs* of our *Attempts*. If that were the trial, 'twere impoſſible for any enterprize to be lawful, ſince that which ſhould legitimate it, is ſubſequent to it, and can have no influence on it, to the making it good or bad: and as it does not make, ſo neither does it infallibly ſignifie it to be either: and of thoſe who preſume it does, I ſhould ask whence it came to do ſo? If by any aſſignation of God, let them produce it; and if not thence, I'm ſure it can make no pretence to certainty, God having no where oblig'd his *Providence* to make good our *phancies* and *conjectures*. Nay, if we look into Scripture-examples, we ſhall find this irrefragably confuted; the ſame Cauſe having at ſeveral times differing ſucceſs. Thus the *Iſraelites* were diſcomfited at their firſt aſſault upon *Ai*, and yet ſucceſsful after; 'twas ſomething extrinſick to the cauſe that made the variation, that ſtill continuing the ſame. The like we find in the caſe of the *Benjamites*, who though in as ill an engagement as can well be imagin'd, had yet two victories over the other Tribes, *Judg.* 20. But there is one inſtance that may ſerve for all, and that is the taking of the Ark by the *Philiſtines*: he that ſhall contemplate that, will ſure never think fit to meaſure cauſes by ſucceſs, unleſs he will give the deference alſo to *Dagon*, who then triumpht in the ſpoils of the God of *Iſrael*. In ſhort, 'tis evident victories are not ſo entail'd upon the juſteſt

juſteſt cauſes, but that they may be, and often are cut off, either by the guilts of the undertakers, or by ſome other ſecret diſpoſal of the Divine wiſdom; but the former is ſo frequently the obvious cauſe of it, that we are not often put to reſort to the latter. 'Tis no ſtrange thing to ſee all *Iſrael* troubled by an *Achan*, or have the *Ark* taken captive from off the ſhoulders of a *Hophni* and *Phineas*, nor will it ever be poſſible for the beſt cauſe to ſecure it ſelf from the blaſting influence of its Abettors crimes.

THIS is ſo clear and evident a Truth, that 'tis matter of ſome wonder, how the contrary perſwaſion ſhould ever inſinuate it ſelf; and indeed it is not probable it ever had, if Intereſt, that grand *Sophiſter*, had not introduced it. Men engage in deſigns not on intuition of their *lawfulneſs*, but *profit*; and when they are ſuch as nothing can warrant *à priore*, their only reſerve is to make them good *à poſteriore*; to bring a licenſe after the fact, and juſtifie their beginning by their end; which how ridiculous ſoever it may ſeem to ſober reaſon, yet ſuch is the natural ſhame, or ſecular inconvenience of owning an *unjuſt Act*, that men will wrap themſelves, though in the thinneſt and moſt *diaphonous veils*, make uſe of the abſurdeſt *pretences*, and fainteſt *colours* to ſhadow their *Guilt*, and whilſt conſciouſneſs bids them ſay ſomewhat for themſelves, and the caſe affords no ſolid plea, they are driven to theſe deplorable ſleights and ſubterfuges. Indeed this is an argument that ſtands ſingle, and is ſeldom uſed but in thoſe cauſes that admit of no better; which we may reaſonably conclude to be the reaſon, why it was ſo much inſiſted on by our late diſturbers, who in ſuch *abundance of light*, as they own'd, could not be ſuppos'd *ignorant* enough to believe themſelves: 'twas certainly the deſtitution of better arguments that caſt them upon this, forc'd them to ranſack the *Alcoran*, and riſle a piece of *Turkiſh Divinity* to make good their *Sainſhip*. They now diſcern the unskilfulneſs of that *plea*, which a little time has converted to an *accuſation*. The great change it has pleas'd God to make among us, retorting their conquering *Syllogiſms*, and making them need a new ſucceſs to juſtifie their vaunts of the old. God grant we may not here relieve them again, and by our perſonal ſins, help them to that which the juſtice of their Cauſe never did, nor is like to acquire them.

BUT

BUT though this *plea* of ſucceſs be frequently urg'd in *policy*, yet it prevails with many who know not that it is ſo; indeed the *vulgar* are ſo much ſubjected to their *ſenſes*, that generally the concluſions drawn thence are eaſily embrac'd, when thoſe from Reaſon and conſcience have a double difficulty, firſt to be underſtood, and next to be admitted, and the moſt *elaborate diſcourſe* ſhall not convince them of the right of that *cauſe*, which in the laſt appeal to Gods Tribunal by War, has been openly condemn'd; whileſt the *ſpoils* of victory as much ſatisfie the Underſtanding of the *juſtice* of the Prize, as the Deſire, with the *wealth* or *glory* of it. And this is it which renders ſuch kind of arguings very pernicious, they being ſo fitted to the common temper, that they ſeldom miſs to be effectual; and engage the *heady multitude* in the Proſecution of the worſt *deſigns*, that are recommended to them by the one *Catholick virtue* of Succeſs. This is indeed as the *Prophet* ſpeaks, *Ez.* 13:22. *to ſtrengthen the Hands of evil doers, that they turn not from their wickedneſs*; to dazzle their Eyes ſo with the ſplendor of proſperous iniquity, that they can never come to take an exact view, and diſcern it in its true form: And doubtleſs this was none of the leaſt prevailing arts of ſeducement among us, and drew in many to abet thoſe ſeditious practices, which all laws of God and Man prohibited, and whereby *Chriſtian Religion* has at once been violated and defam'd; has not only *her precepts* broken, but *her ſelf* aſperſt with the foul conſequences of that diſobedience, and ſo buys one injury with another; the contempt of her *Authority* with the loſs of her *Reputation*.

WE have now ſeen the *ill conſequences* iſſuing from theſe miſtakes of Gods *Providence*, but we muſt take notice that there remains yet as great or greater danger on the other ſide; and that a *total neglect* is worſe than an *erroneous conſtruction* of it. For though God hath ſecluded us from that more exact minute diſcerning of his purpoſes, yet he means not his *diſpenſations* ſhould be lookt on as wholly *inſignificant*, and therefore has given us the general ſcope and meaning of them, according to which we are to limit and reſtrain our *wandring gueſſes*, and alſo judge of *particular events*. Now as Gods original and primary *deſign* in the creation of Man, was to render him a *ſubject capable of eternal happineſs*; ſo alſo have all his *ſubſequent*

Acts

Acts toward him aim'd at the ſame end: and becauſe there is nothing removes man ſo far from that grand purpoſe of his being as Sin; therefore God has made the ſuppreſſing of that the univerſal intendment of his diſpoſals concerning us: ſo that the moſt different diſpenſations do ſeverally purſue that one end; *proſperity* and *adverſity* in their ſucceſſive changes are ſent to reclaim us from the *error of our ways*, with this only difference, that the *one* leads, the *other* drives. This is aſſerted by *S. Paul*, who tells us, that *the goodneſs and long-ſuffering of God it to lead us to Repentance*, *Rom.* 2: 5. And alſo that when we are judg'd, *we are chaſtened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the World*, 1 *Cor.* 11: 32. And indeed the whole Scripture runs in the ſame ſtrain; and both from proſperous and adverſe ſucceſſes urges the obligation to obedience. This is the notice God expects we ſhould take of all his dealings towards us. And the want thereof we find often ſharply upbraided by God to the *Jews*, how often does he recount his redeeming them from *Ægypt*, his enſtating them in *Canaan*, and all his wonderful works for them, with an accuſing reflection upon their ingratitude; and that we may know his *Judgements* are no leſs to be accounted for than his *Mercies*, we find him, *Amos* 4. making a *Catalogue* of them, and cloſing every period with this *Pathetick Reproof* of their obſtinacy, *Yet have ye not returned to me ſaith the Lord.* In ſhort, God requires that we ſhould obſerve every turn of his *hand*, in order to the reforming our own *lives*, and by the ſeveral *mediums* of Gratitude or fear, infer that *neceſſary concluſion* of a ſincere *univerſal Obedience*; and the neglect of this is the crime the *Pſalmiſt* mentions, *Pſalm* 28: 5. with ſo ſevere a menace, *They regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands.*

AND as this is requir'd from ſingle perſons, ſo alſo from Societies and Communities, which as they are in their publick capacities the moſt eminent ſubjects of Judgements or Mercies, ſo are they the moſt eminently accountable for both. And though the Neglect and Abuſe of Gods methods be a very provoking *guilt* when 'tis only *perſonal*, yet is it much more ſo, when it becomes *national*: And therefore as it is every mans concern for his own *peculiar* to examine how he has anſwered Gods methods towards him, ſo is it an enquiry very pertinent in relation to the *Publick* alſo; eſpecially where the diſpen-

diſpenſations have been remarkable and extraordinary; in which reſpect the *Inquiſition* cannot appear more neceſſary for any than *this Nation*; upon which conſideration I hope the Reader will think it no unpardonable digreſſion, if we a while turn aſide after it.

IT is the *affirmation of our Bleſſed Saviour*, that *where much is given, there ſhall be much requir'd*; a thing ſo conſonant with natural Equity, that we all give our ſuffrage to it, by making it the meaſure of our expectations in ſecular things wherein every man looks for *returns* proportionable to his *expence* or Induſtry. The Husbandman expects a *Crop* anſwerable to his *Seed* and *Labour*: and in the nobler *cultures* of the Mind, we juſtly exact of our Pupils to let their *manners* atteſt the *diſcipline* they have been under: According to which eſtimate we muſt reſolve, that Gods expectations from *us* of *this Nation* cannot but be very high, there being no people under the Sun, whom he has more ſignaliz'd as *his own immediate* care, on whom the *Divine Oeconomy* has more conſtantly and even ſolicitouſly attended in all the variety of ſeaſonable and powerful *applications*.

I SHALL not aſſume the work of a *Chronicle*, by giving a ſeries of all thoſe mercies we receiv'd in the loyns of our Anceſtors; and of which we have provided one unhappy memorial, I mean our nauſeating and deſpiſing them; it having been the buſineſs of our days, to diſ-intail thoſe two moſt ineſtimable Bleſſings, of a *pure Religion* and *outward Peace*, which our immediate Progenitors left us; and to derive to our poſterity the contrary miſchiefs of impiety and confuſion.

BUT not to ravel ſo far back, I ſhall confine my reflexions to ſo late a date, that I ſhall not need to beſpeak the faith afforded to *Hiſtorians*; ſcarce any that can be my *Reader*, but is qualified to be my *witneſs* too; and muſt acknowledge that there has on Gods part been no Method wanting, that might purifie us to himſelf a *Peculiar people zealous of good works*. To that end of refining and cleanſing us it was, that he kept us ſo long in the *furnace*, permitted us to thoſe many *Fiery trials* of our late calamitous days. 'Twere impertinent here to give a Deſcription of *thoſe ſufferings*, which every mans memory can ſo

so readily represent to him: or to paint that *Flame* whose scorchings we have felt; 'tis enough to say, that *God* appear'd in them, earnestly industrious to have reduced us; like *a skilful Captain*, besieg'd us closely, straitned us so in all our interests, that it was scarce possible for us to fly any where but to himself. Indeed he that would make up an exact Catalogue of our Calamities, must calculate in how many instances humane nature may be passive, there being scarce any of our suffering capacities, to which they were not liberally apportioned, our *Estates*, our *Persons*, our *Friends*, and which is more than all, our *Consciences*, all groaning under the weight of that *Yoke*, which our own Sins prepar'd, and other mens sins put on. Which way soever he look'd, we saw nothing but that which might consume our *Eyes* and grieve our *Heart*: If on the Church, we saw that torn by *Schism*, spoil'd by *Sacriledge*; the abomination of desolation standing in the Holy place, and the *house of Prayer* made in the most literal sence *a den of Thieves*. If on the State, we saw the *breath* our Nostrils, the *Anointed of the Lord* taken in their *Pits*, *Imprison'd*, and *Arraign'd*, and barbarously *Murder'd*, by those who slew him, like the *Heir* in the Gospel, that they might seize on his *Inheritance*. We saw this and all other Mischiefs establish'd *by a Law*, and made as irreversible as powerful malice could render them. And now in such a distress, who would not think that such a necessity should have become our virtue? and so perfect a destitution compell'd our resort to the Divine aid? And as little oppress States us'd to make themselves homagers to the *Romans*, to engage their protection, so we should have made an entire surrendry of our selves to *God*, that we might have gain'd a title to his rescues and deliverances.

THIS genuine and kindly effect I doubt not but it had in *some*, I would fain think in *many*; but we are not now pondering *particulars*, but the *community*; and therefore how sincere soever such personal reformations were, they must not come under the account of publick and general, unless for their Number and Eminency they had been sufficient to have overwhelmed the contrary perverseness: Many there might be whose hearts (as 'tis said of *Josiahs*, 2 *Chron.* 34: 27.) did melt, and yet the far greater number of the obdurate, still justly denomi-

denominate us *a ſtiff-neck'd people*; an Epithet wherewith God often reproaches the *Jews*, and ſure we have no leſs evidenced our title to it: for alas, as if we had meant to revenge the inexorableneſs of our oppreſſors towards us, in our obſtinacy to God; as if when we could keep nothing elſe, we had yet reſerved this ſullen comfort, of having our hearts impregnable, we made a ſhift to hold out againſt all theſe batteries; there was little *appearance*, and leſs *reality* of Repentance; and if ſome of our *luſts* were at all leſs raging, 'twas only becauſe they were ſtarved into a little tameneſs, the *ſupplies* cut off which ſhould maintain our Riot: but when any recruits could be had, they were devoted that way, and even in the worſt of times we miſt not to be as luxurious as we were able: and as though we reſolv'd that *vice* like the *Sea*, ſhould gain in one part what it loſt in another; we took order that what was thus inevitably defaulkt from thoſe *expenſive* Sins, ſhould be made up in the *cheaper*: we could curſe, and ſwear and blaſpheme in ſpight of *Sequeſtration*, and this wretched Immunity we made abundant uſe of, till we even became *Proverbial* for it; and gave our enemies pretence to faſten it on us as our diſtinctive Character. Yet to ſhew our ſelves generous ſinners, there was *one vice* we bought at a dear rate, I mean our as imprudent, as unchriſtian animoſities, and *picques* among our ſelves; a ſin that helpt to revenge all the reſt: and was as well upon a humane, as divine account, a grand inſtrument of our *ruine*. To theſe we may add our impatient murmurs at our ſufferings, which did in ſome work ſo preposterouſly, as to reconcile them to the inflicters, made them unworthily deſert that cauſe, they found chargeable to maintain, and contrary to the advice of *Solomon* Chuſe the ways of thoſe oppreſſors whoſe proſperity they envied, *Prov.* 3. But of theſe *real Apoſtates* the number I hope was not great, I wiſh I could ſay ſo alſo of thoſe *ſeeming deſertors*, whoſe knees bowed to *Baal*, though their hearts did not: who belied their own *loyalty*, and in a ſhew of compliance proſtituted *conſcience* in ſeveral Engagements as inconſiſtent with each other, as they all were with duty; and ſuch as they pretended no excuſe for their *taking*, but their reſolutions of *breaking*. It was indeed a ſad ſpectacle to ſee what ſholes every menacing Edict brought in; while men ran in as much haſte to take the oppor-

portunity of *Perjury*, as the Primitive Christians were wont to do of *Martyrdom*: Indeed herein we seem'd to invade our enemies peculiar, would not suffer them to enjoy those marks of distinction, they had framed to themselves; so that as far as *oaths* could signifie, we were all *one Party*. And yet while we thus disclaim'd Gods reliefs by these indirect attempts of our own, we took it very ill that he left us to the success of them: That he prosper'd not those methods he had interdicted, and made us Triumphant, not only over our Enemies but himself too: and upon this score many mutinous *blasphemies* were utter'd, and perhaps some more thought, though, I confess, generally we were not so modest, as to stick at saying the worst we could think; and indeed they that heard the frequent doubts men own'd of Gods justice, providence, nay his very being, would not think they suppress any thing as too ill to be spoken: We laid boundless expectations upon the justice of our *cause*, and as if we had extremely oblig'd God by not being *Traitors* or *Schismaticks*, thought he wrong'd us extremely that he made us not *Victors*. *Samuel* tells *Saul*, that *Rebellion was like Witchcraft*; but we seem'd to think *Loyalty* was so; that like a spell, it was to keep us invulnerable, not only against our enemies but our Selves: and so countercharm all our crimes, that they should only be active to please not hurt us. But if in the last place we reflect on our selves even in relation to that *cause* in which we so much confided, 'tis to be fear'd all men will not be able to evince they suffer'd for *God* and the *King*, though they did it in their *quarrel*: 'tis the Intent must denominate whose *Martyrs* they were, it being too frequent for private passions and interests to march under the banner of conscience; and we call that sometimes taking up the *Cross*, which is only the taking up an *animosity* or *humour*. Indeed 'tis not possible for any to be Gods *Martyr*, who is not first his *Servant*; none of us will suffer the greatest things for a person for whom we will not do the least; and 'tis absurd Hypocrisie for a man to pretend he has left *all* for God, who we see cannot be wooed to leave the most despicable *lust* for him. He that will not part with the noise of a loud *Oath*, the pleasure of an intemperate *Cup*, the applause of a profane *Jest* for God, will surely much less expose his *liberty*, his *estate*, his *life* for him: and therefore what hazards soever any man ran

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in any of thoſe, he can with no juſtice ſet it upon Gods account, unleſs he can produce ſuch other acts of obedience, as may witneſs this to be true and genuine. And upon this trial, I fear *Gods party* will appear to have been but ſmall among us, and perhaps *the Kings* not much greater, it being not very probable that thoſe ſhould have any great ſenſe of duty to *him*, that had none to *God*; or that thoſe ſhould religiouſly revere *one* Commandment, who deſpiſed the other *nine*. But we need not the help of inference and probability in this matter, the mutinous and inſolent behaviour of many who profeſt loyalty, did too clearly evince it: And as it is ſaid of *Joab*, that he turn'd after *Adonijah*, though he turn'd not after *Abſalom*, 1 *Kings* 2: 28. and ſome of ours had little private rebellions of their own, even while they oppos'd the more publick, I love not to paſs cenſures on mens thoughts, yet I doubt ſome would be too conſcious to confute me, if I ſhould ſay there wanted not thoſe, who owed their *zeal* to their *Spleen*, and did not ſo much love thoſe they fought *for*, as hated thoſe they fought *againſt*. And it may perhaps deſerve enquiry, whether that demure *pretence of holineſs* their Adverſaries had put on, did not more avert ſome of our *Libertines* from them, than all their *real crimes*; They perhaps ſo far miſtook them, as to ſuſpect they might be in earneſt, when they profeſt to advance the *power of Godlineſs*, and at that took an *Alarm*, and ſuch Men (if ſuch there were) contended not for the Liberty of their *Country*, but their *Luſts*; and could with no juſtice, expect either a reputation, or ſucceſs from that cauſe which they at once helpt to defame and defeat. I am loth to go farther, and ſuſpect that even ſome of the devouter ſort were inſpir'd more by the Spirit of *oppoſition* than *Piety*; yet I confeſs 'tis hard to reſiſt that ſurmiſe, when 'tis conſider'd that our *Liturgie* never had its due veneration, but when the *Directory* was ſet up againſt it. Indeed he that ſhall remember how our *private Oratories* were then throng'd and crouded; and ſhall now compare it with our *empty Churches*, will be tempted to think our *devotion* was of that ſort, which is excited by *interdict*, and deadned by *invitations*; a perverſe kind of Zeal, kindled only by *Antiperiſtaſis* or colliſion; none of that pure flame which deſcends from Heaven. And then as our *Saviour* in another caſe ſays, *If the light that is in thee*

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be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs? *Matth.* 6. If this fairer and more ſpecious part of us were thus reproveable, how obnoxious were the other? And if our Earneſtneſs in a righteous cauſe, by its Siniſter motives or adherencies be unable to juſtifie it ſelf, how ſhall it bear that heavier task we laid on it, and plead for our other Guilts.

THIS is the true, though not full account of our behaviour under *Gods diſcipline*, thus did we fruſtifie upon his pruning us; brought forth indeed nothing but *degenerous fruit*. The *holy Writ* leaves it as a brand of moſt inveterate Impiety upon *Ahaz*, that *in the time of his diſtreſs he ſinn'd yet more againſt the Lord*, 2 *Chron.* 28: 22. and ſure we have too juſt title to the ſame Character of infamy; thoſe ſufferings which were ſent to chaſtiſe our ſins, ſerv'd but to encreaſe them, and like the *Iſraelites* in the *Brick-kilns*, they multiplied the more for their oppreſſion; we debaucht even our *Executioners*, and made every new *calamity* ſupply us with ſome new *vice*. And now when Gods *rod* was thus deſpis'd, we were in all reaſon to expect he ſhould draw his *ſword*, revenge our reſiſtance of his methods, by ſomewhat we could not reſiſt, make our *Plagues* as obſtinate as our *ſelves*, and involve us in hopeleſs inevitable ruine. *This certain fearful looking for of Judgement*, *Heb.* 10: 27. was all we had left our ſelves, of all the rich patrimony we were once poſſeſt of; and our preſent miſery ſeem'd impoſſible to expire any way but by dying into greater.

BUT as great artificers are us'd to magnifie their Art, by chuſing the moſt unlikely materials; ſo did it pleaſe God in this total indiſpoſedneſs of ours, when we were ſo unapt ſubjects to illuſtrate his mercy, and as if he deſign'd this *national deliverance* ſhould (in its proportion) be the Tranſcript of our more *univerſal Redemption*, he viſited us not only in this ſtate of miſery, but enmity; when we had ſet our ſelves in defiance of his *judgements*, he laid as it were an Ambuſh of *mercy* for us, and ſurpriz'd us with ſafety: by ſuch undiſcernable ways *return'd the captivity of our Sion*, that *we were* indeed deliver'd *like them that dream*, *Pſal.* 126: 1. gave us a *victory* without a *war*; without the intervention of *garments rolled*

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in bloud, *Eſay* 9: 5. inveſted us in our Triumphant robes, and in a word, made us inſenſibly to glide into our long forgotten proſperity.

AND now who can imagine, but this miraculous Mutation *without* us, muſt alſo work a Change *within* us? Indeed they muſt have a very ill opinion of humane nature, that can think it poſſible it ſhould have perverſeneſs enough to reſiſt ſuch endearments; ſuch kindly Heat muſt needs be ſuppos'd to melt us; and if before our Pride diſdain'd to be *compell'd*, yet even that ſtubbornneſt part of us cannot object againſt the being *courted into amendment*. So that when God has thus yielded to our terms, left us not ſo much as a *Punctilio* in our way to Piety, 't is but a reaſonable expectation we ſhould *embrace* it with as great an Earneſtneſs, as it was formerly *rejected* by us.

AND would God we could ſay we did ſo; but alas, we ſtill affect prodigies, take a kind of wanton Joy in defeating Gods deſigns, and as if we aſpired to vye Miracles with him, have made our *returns* as unparallel'd as his *mercies*; ſo that the ſumm of our account is this. No Nation was ever more ſignaliz'd by *Gods goodneſs*, or its *own perverſeneſs*, it being hard to determine in which of thoſe reſpects it is moſt *eminent*. That this is in the general perfectly true, there are too many particulars ready to teſtifie, indeed a whole cloud of Witneſſes do concur to the proving the charge. I ſhall not undertake to examine *all*, yet *ſome* of the principal it will not be amiſs to take notice of.

BEFORE we enquire into the *uſe* we have made of Gods Mercies, let us a little conſider what our *ſenſe* of them is; and ſure of all the *interrogatories* we can put to our ſelves, this appears the *eaſieſt*, the moſt gentle favourable Teſt, that even our own partialities could elect for us; it being ſo natural to men in miſery to value a reſcue, and celebrate their deliverers, that the contrary would be the only wonder; we ſee even the *Jews*, who were none of the moſt malleable people, yet *deliverances* made impreſſions on them, ſet them to their *devout proceſſions* and *ſolemn hymns* in praiſe of God: nay, ſuch a piece of native Religion is this, that the *Heathens* exemplifie it to us. The *Philiſtines* when they had taken *Sampſon*, magnified their *Dagon*, as having *delivered their enemy and the deſtroyer of*

of their country into their hands, *Judg.* 16: 24. So upon the victory over *Saul*, 1 *Sam.* 31: 9. *they sent round about to publish it in the house of their Idols.* And in all stories we find, the *Heathen Altars* were never so loaden with *Sacrifices*, as upon such occasions: And the Gospel tells us, that those on whom Christ bestowed miraculous cures, were so transported with them, that their gratitude supplanted their obedience; and made them notwithstanding his prohibition, proclaim the wonders he had done for them: But I fear if we reflect upon our selves, we shall not be able to match any of these instances. Tis true our late *change* was entertain'd with a Joy *profuse* enough, but not enough *religious*. We saw that great things were done for us, and thereof we rejoyced; but we did not so much consider that the *Lord* had done them, *Psal.* 124. and so were rather affected with the *rarity* and *profitableness*, than the *mercy* and *kindness* of the Dispensation: and though the care of our *Governours* have provided for the religious part also, assign'd *days of Purim* for the perpetual commemoration of our *deliverance* yet our slight observance of them does too fully evince our Joy was merely secular; and surely he that observ'd the numerous and loud *acclamations* in the *streets*, and the few faint *Hallelujahs* in the *Temple*, must needs say they were very disproportionate, and that how much soever the most of us rejoyc'd, it was not in the *Lord*: and then we are not to wonder that it was so transient; since it was merely *earthly*, it must needs partake of the fadingness of its *original*: whereas had we deriv'd it higher, it would have been *lasting* and *durable*; it could not so suddenly have expir'd, had we fetcht it from him, *in whose presence is fulness of joy*, *and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore.* But alas, our transports were such as exhausted themselves in their own noise, we expreſt our Joy in *Bonfires*, and it vapour'd away in the *smoke*; there wanted that mixture of Piety which should have fix'd that *volatile Passion*, and we who at first were much more glad than thankful, within a very short time ceased to be either.

AND then as *violent Heats* when once expir'd, are succeeded by the *extremest Cold*; so has it fared with us; we fell from our *Ecstasies* not to the mean, but the contrary extreme; our vast complacencies at their parting, carried with them

them even ordinary contentation, and left us not only joyleſs, but impatient. It was indeed matter of equal ſhame and wonder, to ſee a ſcene ſo ſuddenly chang'd, wherein as in many other inſtances, we ſeem'd to have tranſcrib'd the copy of the mutinous *Iſraelites*, whom we find in the very ſame Chapter, *Exod.* 15. triumphing and repining; and no ſooner were the Timbrels out of their *hands*, but Complaints were in their *mouths*, verſ. 24. *What ſhall we drink?* And in the beginning of the next, with the ſame querulous importunity they require meat. But not to wrong them in the compariſon, their Murmurs had ſome extenuating circumſtances which ours have not; they lookt indeed with ſome appetite upon *Egypt*, and made ſome propoſals of Return, but it was while they ſuffer'd the hardſhips of the *wilderneſs*; they preferr'd a repleted *ſlavery*, before a hungry *freedom*; but even they were not ſo frantick in their mutinies, as to make any ſuch offer in *Canaan*, or have any Emulation to the *Garlick* and *Onions*, amidſt the affluence of *Milk* and *Honey*: No, 'tis we Alone that have the unhappy skill of reconciling the ſins of *Canaan*, and the *Wilderneſs*; murmur as much under our *Vines* and *Figtrees*, as at *Rephidim*, or *Marah*, and make all the out-cries of *want* and *ſlavery*, whileſt we wallow in the utmoſt luxury of *plenty* and *freedom*. I need not here ſpecifie the particulars of our Murmurings, this diſcourſe being not likely to find many whoſe innocence will need that information, this *malignant humor* having ſpread ſo, that 'tis now become almoſt a ſcandalous (becauſe a ſingular) thing to be contented. And certainly a conſidering Foreiner, that ſhould come among us, could not but be aſtoniſh'd to ſee a Nation ſo full of all thoſe things which uſe to create temporal ſatisfactions, and yet to find no body in it ſatisfied; to ſee ſo many parties among us, and none proſperous. This is ſuch a riddle as would tempt a man to ſuſpect his *ſenſes*, and think we had all this while but dreamt of a *reſtoration*: been under the deluſion the *Prophet* deſcribes of the *hungry and thirſty man*, *that at his waking finds he is empty*, *and his ſoul hath appetite*, *Eſay* 29: 8. 'Tis a ſad, but viſible truth, that all that God has done for us, hath been ſo far from filling our deſires, that it has only ſerv'd to enlarge them: for I appeal to any of our loudeſt mutineers, whether if ſome years ſince the preſent ſtate of affairs

affairs had been represented to them, dress in the worst circumstances they now complain of, they would not then have thought it extremely amiable, worth *Rachels* prize of seven years more hardship; nay, whether they would not willingly have made some abatements, relinquisht part of what they now enjoy, to have had the rest secur'd? And when God has granted us all we *then* askt, shall we murmur because we could *now* perhaps ask something more; and like ingrate Debtors, pick a quarrel to evade payment? Was it not enough that he engag'd his *Omnipotence* for us, but must his *Omniscience* also be prest upon the same service? and provide all he could foresee we could wish? Alas, do we think we have the same hank upon God, that some Gallants have on their trusting Merchants, that upon peril of losing all former scores, he must still go on to supply us? Shall we think nothing fit for oblivion but our obligations? And in this perverse sence transcribe *S. Paul*, *Phil.* 3: 13. *forgetting those things which are behind, reach forward to the things that are before*: this indeed too fully speaks us the off-spring of our first Parents; we can find no gust in all the fruits of *Paradise*, if any one be denied us; and still look not on what we *have*, but what we *want*; and as it is observ'd of the greedier sort of creatures, that they relish not one bit for the vehement expectation of another: So is it with us, we *devour*, but do not *enjoy* our Blessings; and to require him to satisfie us, is to assign him the *Poets* Hell, set him with *Belus* daughters to the task of filling a *sieve* with water, or rolling *Sysiphus*'s stone; our growing appetites still keeping us empty and restless amidst all endeavours to make us otherwise; so that whereas God uses to commit his *favours* to Men, as *seed* to the Earth, in expectation of an *harvest*, some fruits of gratitude and obedience; they seem with us rather to be flung into a *Gulph*, whose property is only to *swallow*, never to *fructifie*.

I KNOW mens *Minds* are so possest with their discontents, our daily mutinous blast have puft up and swelled our grievances to such vastness, that he must expect to be very impatiently heard, that shall attempt to represent them in a lesser size; yet sure 'twere not impossible even upon a direct view, to demonstrate them very *light* and *moderate*: but upon a comparative, perfectly *trivial* and *inconsiderable*; an

'tis a little ſtrange, that we who bare our *late ſuffering eſtate* with ſo much Impatience, ſhould not have impreſſions enough left in our memory, to confront to all our *preſent regrets*. Do we not quietly now poſſeſs the fruits of our own, or our Progenitors *induſtry*, without danger of any Sequeſtration, but what our own Luxuries inflict? Are not our *Perſons* at freedom; deliver'd from that kind word, and unkind thing, SECURING? So that when we riſe in the Morning, we need not fear our next lodging ſhall be in the *Goal* or dungeon; nor when we ſit down to our Meal, ſuſpect the intruſion of *arm'd uninvited Gueſts*, who ere whiles, we know, were wont to ſurſpriſe us, as the Plague did the *Iſraelites*, *even while the meat was yet in our mouths*; are not our Lives under the cuſtody of known *Laws*, ſo that no man is in danger that will but keep himſelf within thoſe *Boundaries*; nor need fear to be mockt into his grave by ſhews and Pageantries of Juſtice? And beſides theſe real *eſcapes* from *ſlavery*, are we not reſcued from the moſt imbittering circumſtance of it, the having *ſervants rule over us*? A thing which rendred our ſubjection as mean and ſervile, as it was ſharp and preſſing, and which we were *then* ſo ſenſible of, that it never miſt to *bring up the rear* of our Complaints. Laſtly, if we reflect upon our higher ſpiritual concerns, are we not freed from thoſe boiſterous robuſt *temptations*, which with the violence of Famine and Sword, Beggary and Death aſſaulted our *conſtancy*, and left no mean between Martyrdom and Apoſtaſie? Are we not alſo reſtor'd to all thoſe ſpiritual advantages which we once profeſt ſo much to value? That *well of life* now lies open before us, after which we once panted like the *Hart* after the *water-ſprings*; our ancient *worſhip* is reviv'd, and wants only our attendance to make it ſolemn; whereas the *abomination of Deſolation* ſtood in the holy place, our prayers were turned to ſin; needed, but were denied the *Liturgie* to pray againſt them, or atone their guilts. We have no longer *ſtones* given us for *bread*, nor experiment that ſad riddle, of being at once cloyed and ſtarved; amidſt exceſs of preaching ſuffering a Famine of the Word. And now are all theſe worth no regard? If they are not, why did we exclaim ſo loudly when we wanted them? If they are; why are we ſtill as querulous now we have them? 'Tis ſure, theſe include all our great

great and substantial interests as men, and Christians, and those being provided for, 'tis not easily imaginable what others we should have important enough to make us querulous, unless it be those of Passion and Humour. One mans *ambition* perhaps wants a satisfaction, another mans *avarice*, a thirds *spleen*; and this *discord* makes up the very unmusical Harmony of our *murmurs*. If we see but a *Mordecai* in the Kings gate whom we wish removed, we can like *Haman* find no gust in any thing we enjoy. If we see some, who we think have born less of the burden and heat of the day, rewarded equally or perhaps above our selves, we are sure to make out the Parable, by murmuring at the good man of the house: Or if *Nineveh* be spar'd, if all be not executed to whom we have denounc'd destruction, we like *Jonah* sit down in a sullen discontent, and grow weary of our lives, because others are permitted to enjoy theirs. To these and other heads of the like nature, 'tis apparent our *grievances* may be reduced; and then if the balance be put into any dispassionate hand, 'tis sure they can never become a counterpoize to the other real benefits we enjoy, but will in the *Prophets* phrase appear *lighter than vanity and nothing*.

BUT I suppose some will say, 'tis not only *present* uneasinesses of which they are impatient, but the possibility of *future*, a fear of relapsing into our former estate by the ill managery of our present: To these I shall answer, that admit it were so, yet sure 'twill be no wisdom to anticipate our miseries, to foretal discontents, and make foresight as painful as actual suffering. In other forbidden instances we chuse to enjoy the present, and with an *Epicurean* Indifferency cry. *Let us eat and drink for to morrow we die*, 1 *Cor.* 15: 32. How is it that we here become so unluckily sagacious, unless it be that murmuring is a Sensuality we account equivalent, nay superior to all rational satisfactions; and therefore that we may have no intermission of that delight, suborn our phancies to find occasions, and fetch in from the future those supplies which the present affords not: But besides this, I should in the second place ask these great *Diviners*, why they do not also foresee, that this very *mutinous temper* of theirs is the most direct and infallible means of bringing those *mischiefs* they pretend to fear; that it is so, is most evident, and so well ob-

ſerv'd by our *Adverſaries*, that there is little doubt, they have not only pleaſure, but deſigns upon it; and to that purpoſe have their *Engins* on work to blow up the *hot Spirits* among us, in expectation from thence to raiſe a *flame*. So blind a thing is *Paſſion*, that it hurries on to the things which in their iſſue we moſt abhor; makes us our Enemies *drudges*, and the *forgers* of our own ſhackles; and whilſt we cry out of petty Indulgencies, we our ſelves give them in the *lump*, what we grudge them in *parcels*: This is a miſerable infatuation, and while we act thus unreaſonably, we are ſure no competent declaimers againſt ill managery. But beſides this natural effect of our murmurs, we are alſo to remember that there is a Divine vengeance attending it: when *bounties* and *largeſſes* are quarrell'd at, we neceſſitate God to another Method, nay indeed, not only his *vengeance*, but even his *kindneſs* ſeems to ſuggeſt it; when he ſees our conſtitutions ſuch, that his gentle applications work contrary effects, 'tis very appoſite for him to try whether the *Antiperiſtaſis* will operate on the other ſide; if we are thus under *lenitives*, 'tis but fit to eſſay, if *corroſives* will caſe us; and the only remaining experiment for the making us *happy* is to make us *miſerable*.

BUT would God we might yet prevent the need of ſuch unkindly *expedients*, and by a ſober eſtimate, and thankful ſenſe of what we have, provide to conſerve it: not faſtidiouſly deſpiſe great and eminent *bleſſings*, becauſe perhaps they come not home to every part of our *wiſhes*. Alas, thoſe plenary ſatisfactions agree not with the nature of Earthly things: 'Tis an obſervation long ſince rais'd from the Globular and Triangular form of the World and our Hearts, that 'tis impoſſible the one ſhould be fil'ed with the other, there will ſtill be ſome angles, ſome vacuities left; our very *acceſſions* create new *wants*; and like an unſound limb, the healing of *one* Sore is the breaking out of *another*. Every thing under the *Moon* partakes of her *viciſſitudes*, augments and decreaſes only with this difference, that though their *wanes* be to as low a degree as hers, they never are perfectly *at the full*. There never was, nor never will be a State here completely happy: And as the *Philoſopher* handſomely reproacht the impatience of the *Perſian* King for the death of his Wife, by undertaking to revive her, if he could help him but to the names of

of *three* men, that had never griev'd, to write upon her *Tomb*; so surely we may make the like offer to our *malecontents*, and engage to redeem all their uneasinesses, if they can point us out (I say not three, but) *one age* wherein there were no *complaints*. What then are our clamorous Repinings, but so many loud *invectives* against Gods *decree*; a Desire to subvert his fundamental *Law*, and confound the *distinction* he has irreversibly set between our *Earthly* and our *Heavenly* state? And alas, What mad insolence is this, to expect that the whole *Oeconomy* of the World must be chang'd only to humour us? That God must replant us a *Paradise*, pluck up every one of the Briars and Thorns which were our native curse? Nay, bring down *Heaven* to us, and enstate us in undisturb'd unmix'd felicities? This is indeed simply considered a very wild expectation, but yet more so, when 'tis considered how we qualifie our selves for such a priviledge: for let me ask, are we as eager to anticipate the *holiness*, as the *happiness* of Heaven? Do we as passionately desire to do *Gods* will, as that God should do *ours*? And emulate the *Angelical obedience* and purity, as much as *bliss*? These are Interrogatories which need no verbal Answer, our lives do too fully resolve them in the negative; and then how shameless a partiality is it, thus to carve to our selves, and chuse out of either state what we best like, reserve all the *sensualities* of this World, and yet cry out for the *impassibleness* of the next; but alas, these are pretensions as inconsistent as they are bold, *vices* having such a native inseparable adherency of *pain* and *vexation*, that 'tis not the most dexterous managery of a sin that can ever sever them, but if we will retain the *one*, we must the *other* also: A Truth which might be exemplified to us throughout the whole *Catalogue* even of sensual sins; but it is most eminently visible in this of *murmuring*, which stays not as others do to take Pain at the *rebound*, and by way of result; but has it as its first *Element* and principle; it being it self almost as great a pain, as any it can betray us to: and yet to secure an advance and *perpetuity* of Torment, every Event serves to foment and heighten it, and the most desperate things are equally combustible to that *flame*. Indeed he that is possest with that humour, has a kind of fury within him, that will never let him rest: And alas, what *Legions* of such evil Spirits are now

among us? How are we as it were inſpir'd with *Mutiny*, it being the *univerſal dialect* of the Nation; and of many in it, who cannot be ſuppos'd to found it in any obſervation of their own, but are led by the *common genius*, and bellow rather by conſent with the reſt of the herd, than for any uneaſineſs, at leaſt of *injuſtice* and *oppreſſion* (for ſuch only give pretence for *Mutiny*) that themſelves feel. And ſince 'tis become a *Plebeian vice*, would God our *Gentry* would uſe it as they do their *faſhions*, and leave it off (if for no better reaſon) for its being *vulgar*: And indeed 'twere but equitable, that thoſe who haven taken up ſo many ſins upon *punctilio*, ſhould for once lay down one upon the ſame ſcore. The *Athenian* State put down their *Oſtraciſm* (which otherwiſe they were fond enough of) becauſe it was debaſed, by happening to fall on *Hyperbolus*, a deſpicable and abject perſon: and there ſeems not much difference in the caſes, ſave only that we are more tenacious of *Sins*, than they of *Puniſhments*; and I fear we ſhall ſo long retain this, till we find it its own *Victor*, not only in the *preſent uneaſineſs*, but in that more *fruitful harveſt* of Miſchiefs, whereof it has now ſown the ſeeds. We ſee here what our thankfulneſs is, for thoſe eminent miraculous mercies we have receiv'd, and the account of that is an unhappy *ſpecimen*, what we are like to find, when we ſurvey the uſes we have made of them, which God knows have been ſo unnatural and perverſe, as does too fully parallel the former inſtance.

FOR firſt, if we reflect upon our *ſpiritual bleſſings*, what has the enjoyment of thoſe advantages produced, but the contempt of them? we have an eaſie free acceſs to God in his Sanctuary, our *Churches* are no longer *Garriſons* to keep out the worſhip to which they were devoted, but like *hoſpitable doors*, are open to the regular piety of any that will enter. And now we have this liberty, now the *flaming ſword* is removed, we have loſt all appetite to the *Tree of life*, can willingly let thoſe *Everlaſting gates* (as the *Pſalmiſt* ſtyles them) *Pſal.* 24. *ſtand* as everlaſtingly *open*, ere we enter them: And though the Fabricks are by Gods providence reſcued from their duſt and ruines, yet many of us endeavour to reduce them to a yet worſe deſolation, ſtrive to depopulate thoſe ſacred Manſions, and execute againſt them that *prophetick threat* concerning *Nineveh*, *Nahum* 1. *Leave them empty, void and waſte.* And indeed

indeed so they are, if not in an absolute, yet in a Comparative sence; for could we at any time of *Divine Service* make an estimate of *all* the persons that are absent, 'twould scarce be discern'd that *any* are there; were all corners ransackt, what a multitude of *Recusants* should we find upon a far differing account from that of Conscience? Some we should see stretching themselves upon their beds, keeping a Sabbath indeed, but to their *sloth*, not their *God*; other perhaps we may find rous'd from their Couches, upon the summons not of *Religion* but *vanity*; some new garment is to be fitted, some exotick dress essayed, and they who grudge *one hour* to the Preachers glass, can spend *many* at their own; where they are so taken up with their *Idolatries* to themselves, that they think of no other worship; nay, as the world goes, 'twere well this were the worst diversion, that some did not keep from Church, that they might in the interim, defile those lesser Temples of God they carry about them, and cut themselves off from the Communion of *Christs body*, to make themselves *members of an Harlot*: or that others were not *Bacchus* his Votaries when they should be *Gods*, spend that time in their frantick revels, and sing a *Dithyrambick* instead of *Te Deum*. As for the *Mammonist*, if he keep any holy day, 'tis like the *Israelites* to his *Gods of Gold*, *Exod.* 32: 31. He is looking with veneration on his Idoliz'd treasure, numbring those bags he dares not use, or perhaps with a more active Zeal pursuing the means of encreasing them. Thus alas, may we go from one to another, and as it was in *Ezekiel's* vision, see still greater abominations, *Ezek.* 8. And certainly that All-seeing Eye, which discerns what multitudes do thus busie themselves, at the times even of his solemnest worship, cannot but adjudge us most profane despisers of his mercy in restoring it: Yet would to God 'twere only the *absent* upon whom that sentence would fall; but alas, the behaviour of many in the Church does too loudly testifie how little of devotion brings them thither, and at how mean rate they value all that is done there: Those *Eyes* which there should wait on God, as those *of a Servant on the hands of a Master*, *Psal.* 123: 2. are rolling about to fetch in all the vanities and temptations which can occur to them, and look *every way*, but *towards Heaven*. Our *Tongues* which should be toucht with a Coal from the

Altar, devoted wholly to Hymns and Prayers, are buſied in *private Colloquies* with thoſe about us: Buſineſs, News, nay, all the impertinent chat of our moſt vacant hours, is then taken up to entertain us; ſo that he who would know the *talk of the Town* or neighbourhood, need go neither to Exchange nor Market, the *Church* will as certainly ſupply him: And this ill employment of our *Tongues*, engages the like of our *Ears*, which when they ſhould be hearkening what the Lord God will ſay concerning us, are liſtening to thoſe *vain diſcourſes* we hold with one another; from all which outward indecencies we may too ſurely collect the inward irreverence of our heart. And is it poſſible that this ſhould now be the Temper of *thoſe*, who not long ſince ſeem'd to bewail their *exclusion* from thoſe ſacred Aſſemblies? Did we long for *them* as *David* for the *waters of Bethlehem*, when they appear'd unattainable, and when they are brought to us, refuſe to taſte them, pour them out not as he did in *devotion*, but in *contempt*? 'Tis true indeed, in *temporal* Delights *poſſeſſion* uſually proves a nauſeating thing, and takes off our *appetite*; but it uſes not to be ſo in *ſpiritual*, whoſe peculiar property it is, not to ſatiate, but excite by fruition: But alas, though the Things we converſe with are *ſpiritual*, our Hearts are *carnal*, and that is the cauſe why inſtead of crying out with the *Pſalmiſt*, *When ſhall I come to appear in the preſence of God*, *Pſal.* 42 We, like thoſe in *Malachy*, Chap. 1: 13. *Snuff at his ſervice, and ſay*, *What a wearineſs is it?* A wearineſs indeed it appears in the literal ſence with many, who ſleep at it as men overlabour'd, and ſcarce take ſo ſound repoſe in their own houſes as in Gods; indeed ſuch is the variety of rude behaviour that is there us'd, that ſhould an *unbeliever* come into our Aſſemblies, he muſt ſurely (as *S. Paul* ſuppoſes in another caſe, 1 *Cor.* 14: 23) ſay, *we are mad*; to ſee ſome gazing, ſome whiſpering, ſome laughing, others ſleeping, and perhaps the far fewer number praying, is ſuch a *medly*, as the moſt brutiſh *Idolaters* never admitted in their *worſhips*; and the way of worſhipping *Mercury*, by throwing ſtones, or *Hercules* by curſing, is a ſober and decent kind of ſervice compar'd with this. And now alas, when will the *Church* recover its ancient Title, and become the *houſe of prayers*? 'Tis ſure according to the preſent appearance it may have many more proper

proper names, that being the least part of the business done in it: 'Tis true, there are some that make it a *Sanctuary*, but 'tis only against the penalties of the *Law*, or reproach of arrant *Atheism*; they come to save their money or their credit; others perhaps shun the solitariness of being at home, and come not as to a place of *Devotion*, but *Concourse*; and 'tis to be doubted, some visit that place as they do many others, because they have nothing else to do: They want their week-days diversion, and so are driven thither upon mere destitution of more grateful entertainments; make it a kind of *Sunday play-house*, sit there as Spectators or Judges, to see the *company* or censure the *Preacher*, but never remember that themselves have any other part to act; or are beheld by *Him*, who will not always be patient of such profanation; but will, as the *Scripture* speaks, *Repay them to their face, who thus contemn him to his*. We know among men, every one counts his House his fortress; and an Affront offered him *there*, doubles the Injury, and is not only a *contempt*, but an *invasion*: and shall it not be a proportionable enhansement with *God* also, thus to defie him *within his own doors*; and approach his presence in an impious bravery, the more fully to shew him, how little we regard him? At this rate while we address our selves, we may as ill manner'd Guests be *forbid his house*: Interrogated by God as the *Jews* were, *Isay* 1. *Why dost thou tread my Courts?* A total abandoning of Worship being more fair and ingenuous than such Devotion: wherein like the *barbarous souldiers*, we bring Christ a *Scepter*, only to *smite* him on the head with it; and make a preface of *homage*, to give our selves the sport of the *mockery*: nay, 'tis sadly to be fear'd, that God may *thrust* us out of his House, *shut* his Doors against us, *rescue* his Service and himself from our profanation, and put us again under the same, (or a worse interdict than that) which lately lay upon us.

HAVING now seen our scandalous Irreverence towards Gods worship in *general*, 'tis too easie to make Application to the *several parts* of it; every one of which must necessarily partake of the contempt which falls upon the whole; for while we bring no thoughts but *secular* with us, those are equally disagreeing to all the *Divine* offices: 'twill be needless therefore to trace our wandrings in each of those, since our whole be-

haviour in the Church is one great *deviation* from the buſineſs we ſhould come about: yet that ſuperſedes not to every guilty perſon himſelf the neceſſity of a more diſtinct and particular reflection. 'Tis ſure at the *laſt dreadful Audit*, we muſt account for every of thoſe ſpiritual advantages we have abus'd; and alas, what a *diſmal reckoning* will many of us have then to give up, when our *prayers* which we now turn into Sin, ſhall be turned into *perdition*? And we *who* would not ſupplicate our God, ſhall in vain invoke the *mountains and hills to hide us from the face of the Lamb*, when that Word which we now ſo faſtidiouſly deſpiſe, that it muſt be dreſt up in the colours of humane Rhetorick, to make us at all patient of it, and becomes then only tolerable to us, when it is fartheſt removed from being Gods: when *that word*, as our *Saviour* ſpeaks, *ſhall judge us*, and that gracious *invitation to life* end in that fatal ſentence, *Go ye curſed*. Nay, when our very propitiation ſhall *plead* againſt us, and the crucified Body of our Saviour, which we have *in Effigie* ſo often recrucified in our unworthy approaches, or impious neglect of the holy *Euchariſt* ſhall *witneſs* againſt us as its *murderers*, when we ſhall be found not *ſprinkled* as with the bloud of a *ſacrifice*, but *imbrued* as with that of *ſlaughter*: when all theſe means of our ſalvation, ſhall thus miſerably convert, and from the *ſavour of life*, become that *unto death*, 2 *Cor.* 2: 16. then we ſhall to our amazement find, how differing our eſtimates of them were from Gods; and in his vengeance read the value he put upon them. What then have we now to do, but to anticipate our *dooms-day*, and *judge our ſelves that we may not be judged of the Lord*. To make an impartial account of all theſe our profanations, and accuſe our ſelves before his *mercy-ſeat*, that ſo we may prevent the arraignment at his *bar of Judgement*. And as Offenders are uſual'y enjoyn'd to acknowledge their guilts in the very places where they committed them; ſo let us make the *Church* the Scene of our *penitence*, as we have of our *faults*: By our ſtrong crying and tears, deprecate our former indevotion, and by an exemplary Reverence, redreſs the ſcandal of our Profaneneſs. This, and only this is the way to ſecure us againſt the *final* Vengeance of theſe ſins; nay, and againſt the *intermedial* alſo: for we are not to expect that ſo unkind abuſe of mercy ſhall be wholly reſpited to another world,

world, it being so exasperating a *crime*, as must in all probability awake Gods *fury*, and pull down present Judgements. I wish the Event do not too soon attest the reasonableness of this supposal.

IF from our *spiritual* Blessings, we now descend to our *temporal*, we shall not appear much better managers of those; they being generally employed to purposes the most distant from those, for which they were given. And first for our *peace*, that great comprehensive enjoyment, upon which all others are dependent, and which is to our *civil* Capacities, the same that *health* is to our *natural*; the thing by which we relish and taste the rest of our comforts, we may from the Song of *Zachary*, *Luke* 1. learn for what intent God bestows it: *Deliverance from enemies* is to no other end, but that we may *serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life*: But alas, he that observes how we employ our quiet, must surely say it serves little to the advancement either of Holiness or Righteousness: For the first of these we have already seen, how little of *holiness* we shew even in that place where nothing else should be admitted; and we are not so preposterously religious, to shew more in others. That *Piety* which is so cold and benumm'd under the warm breath of the *publick Ordinances*; we may well presume stark frozen, in our more retir'd offices: and if it thus faint and sink in consort, 'tis sure more liable to the Wise mans *Væ soli*, and utterly dies when we are alone. 'Tis true indeed, these *Closet-transactions* are immediately visible to none but the *searcher of hearts*, yet in true Devotion there is such a *Symmetry* and proportion, that the Inferences we make by *analogie* may be very irrefragable: nay, 'tis to be fear'd many lye open to a yet clearer *conviction*, and may be proved to have few or none of those private intercourses with Heaven; for though a negative be not simply evincible, yet as in civil cases we prove a man not to have been at this time in such a place, by his having actually been in another; so were the whole Week, Month, perhaps Year, of some men exactly traced, we should find them so engrossed with other *diversions*, that there will scarce be found any Minute for *devotion* to interpose: Mens worldly or fleshly Concerns so divide their *time*, that God from whom 'tis all deriv'd, can be afforded no tribute out of

it. Yet alas, 'twere well if this privative ſort of impiety were all we had to anſwer for: but 'tis too apparent we do not only *neglect* God, but *reproach* and violate him: what elſe are thoſe bold and inſolent *blaſphemies* wherewith we daily aſſault him, making him the mark at which all our wild Paſſions are ſhot. Do we want any thing either for our *uſe* or *delight*? Preſently *God* is accuſed, his *providence* or his *goodneſs* queſtioned; and he declaim'd againſt either as impotent or illiberal. Does any body vex or diſquiet us? God muſt have his ſhare of our diſpleaſure, his ſacred name muſt be profaned, and we count our fierceſt *Revilings* of men, faint and inſignificant, if not inſpired with the moſt *dreadful* and *horrid Oaths*; Nay, he ſtands obnoxious to all the diſplacencies we receive even from inanimate creatures; if a *Die* or a *Card* run amiſs, our reſentments are preſently vented upon him; he is profaned and vilified, as if he were the *Cheat* that rookt us of our *money*, becauſe he does not ſecure us from thoſe loſſes, to which we wantonly expoſe our ſelves. Nor is it only our eager and warmer *paſſions* that thus invade him: Our pleaſanter *moods* do the very ſame, and we blaſpheme by way of divertiſement; every impertinent ſtory or inſipid *Jeſt*, muſt have the haut-gouſt of an Oath to *recommend* it, as every incredible Narration has to *atteſt* it: to ſay nothing of thoſe more ſolemn and deliberate *perjuries*, wherein we impiouſly ſuborn Gods venerable and dreadful *name*, to be the Engine of our fraud and malice: and as if we thought he would forſwear as well as we, bring him to *countenance* thoſe Crimes he has vowed to *puniſh*. Thus do we with a prodigious impiety contaminate even divinity it ſelf, make it the ſink for all our puddles to run into; and proſtitute that *name*, which as the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaks, is *great*, *wonderful and holy*, to all the unholy *purpoſes*, our Paſſions, our Intereſts, or our Phancies can ſuggeſt to us.

THIS *profaneneſs* is ſo proper a foundation for *Atheiſm*, that we are not to wonder to ſee ſo many advance from the one to the other; they pay ſo little of the reverence due to God, that at laſt they turn their *impiety* into *argument*, and infer him not to be God, whom they treat ſo unlike one. And truly this ſeems to be the grand piece of *Logick*, which has diſputed many, not only out of *Chriſtian* but all *native* Religion. How unhappily ſucceſsful it has proved among us, is too apparent in thoſe

those impious discourses which are every where heard, wherein men are arriv'd to such a licentiousness, that *Davids Atheist* was a modest Puny, who only said in his Heart, *There is no God*, and perhaps upon that account shall by some be adjudged to deserve the Epithet the *Psalmist* gives him, and be indeed thought a *fool*, that would not own what would now a-days so certainly denominate him a *Wit*, or in the solemn style, a *Master of Reason*. And indeed they will attest the property of the style, they rather *governing* Reason, than being *govern'd* by it; otherwise 'twould be hard to discern, how from different *premises* the same *conclusion* should be induced: and those who in the late adverse times denied God in revenge of their sufferings, should now pay their gratitude also in the same manner, and renounce him as (or more) loudly, since his signal attestation of that *righteous cause*, his not owning whereof was then their *principal plea*. The truth is, 'tis a little strange how Atheism could admit such enhansing accessions as we find it has; for it being the completion and highest step of Ill, and that to which all others do but subordinately tend, one would think, it should from its first appearance in the World, have been so mature and full grown a sin, as could be capable of no improvement; but so subtilly wicked are these latter days, that we can never be brought to a *non ultra*, but still find something to add to the completest sin: therefore though of those that are really Atheists, one cannot be said to be more so than another, yet some may be more daringly, and mischievously so; and sure in that respect our *modern* surmount all *former*: They were generally on the defensive part, took up the *tenet* as a *buckler* against the unwelcome invasions & Checks of conscience, and design'd nothing but the more *peaceable enjoyment* of their *lusts*; but *now* men do not only use, but love it; make themselves its avowed *Champions*, seek to win it *Proselytes*; and in short, appear so zealous for it, as if they made it their *religion* to have none. And God knows, too many such reverse kinds of *Evangelists* we now have, who with as great design unteach Divinity, as the first Propugners taught it; and their *number* and *boldness* have so encreas'd since the return of our *peace*, that sure the next Age will have little cause to think *Religion* had any share in the *Restoration*. Thus have we done our parts to supersede that obligation of serving God in holiness, by leaving no God to serve; and after the most signal attestation of

his Deity in our reſcue, *we* do like thoſe *ingrate perſons*, who ſeek to ſubvert thoſe by whom themſelves were eſtabliſh'd, and *deny* him becauſe he has *own'd* us.

THIS is the *holineſs* wherewith we have ſerv'd him, ſince our being deliver'd from the hands of our Enemies, and our *righteouſneſs* has been very proportionable; for if we look into the dealings of all ranks of men, we ſhall find the ſame vein of *deceit* run through all tranſactions. A few years ſince Sequeſtration and Plunderings, thoſe *whole-ſale robberies* had ſo overtopt the reſt, that like an *Epidemick diſeaſe* they had overwhelm'd, if not the *kind*, yet at leaſt the *notice* of all other Injuſtices: but ſince thoſe *Leviathans* are withdrawn, the *leſſer Devourers* ſupply their place; Fraud ſucceeds to Violence; and in all places, all occaſions of commerce, we ſtill meet with Sequeſtrators. The adulterated wares and falſe meaſures in *Shops*; the dilatory proceedings, and evaſive tricks in *Law*; the various and unworthy Cheats of *Creditors*, and the mean and diſhoneſt advantages which are watcht in all ſorts of *Contracts*, are too irrefragable proofs hereof. Nay, not only our Buſineſs, but our very *recreations* expoſe us to theſe deceits, as ſome of our bankrupted Gameſters can too ſadly witneſs; what troops of *Harpyes* attend thoſe ſports is every mans obſervation: 'Tis ſtrange ſo many ſhould yet be to learn the prudence to avoid ſo known a danger, wherein a man is at once made active and paſſive in the ſame Robbery, and does himſelf defraud his *family* of that, whereof he is defrauded by *another*. But amongſt theſe many injuſtices, there is none wherein Men ſeem generally to find ſuch a guſt and ſenſuality, as thoſe wherein God is concern'd; *twenty* Laybooties humour them not ſo much as *one* from the Clergy; and if the Quakers ſhould be muſtered according to that one Tenet of not paying Tithes, we ſhould indeed find their numbers formidable. How ſubtle even the rudeſt perſons are in defaulking thoſe dues, we ſee by every days experiment, the over-reaching their Miniſter being the grand Triumph of a Ruſticks wit; ſo that not only their covetouſneſs, but their vanity is concern'd in it: I know 'tis the uſual *apologie* for this kind of Sacriledge, that either the *maintenance* of the Clergy is too much, or their *merit* too little; for the firſt, I think it may be demonſtrated, That there is no *liberal Science*, and but few *Mechanick trades*, from

from which a man may not hope as plentiful a *subsistence*, as this affords to the generality of its *professors*: However I shall leave those that make this objection to dispute it with that authority, which has allotted them this proportion; desiring them to consider, that whatever the support of the Clergy is, it costs them nothing; no man having Purchast more, than what remains of the Estate, after his Tith is paid. As to the second, I confess 'tis extremely to be wisht, that the *negligence* and *vice* of Some did not give too much *pretence* to the Allegation; and to such I cannot but apply the words of our *Saviour*, Matt. 18:7. *Wo be to the man by whom the offence cometh*; yet certainly 'tis very incompetent, to justifie the detention of their *legal rights*: for till the Law which has assign'd them, delegate the Forfeiture to me, the greatest *enormities* of my Pastor, cannot entitle *me* to any thing that is *his*: And indeed what blame soever is really due to *some*, we must expect it should extend to *all*, if the Accusers were to have the benefit of the Mulct; and (as in the late confusions) all Ministers should be made *scandalous*, in order to the making them *poor*.

'TWERE easie to draw up a far larger Catalogue of those *injustices* we daily commit; for as a man has divers other concerns besides his goods, so he may be injur'd in all those: and truly the iniquity of these days, seems fully commensurate to all the suffering capacities of mankind; we *weigh* our own and others Concerns in very *differing balances*, and *offer* those Injuries without any regret, which we can with no patience *suffer*: How nicely jealous is every one of us of his *own* Repute, and yet how maliciously Prodigal of *other mens*? so that Defamation is become one of our main *Topicks* of discourse, furnishes entertainment to all companies; the *present* owe their Divertisement to the *absent*, and many would be drein'd quite dry, were it not for this reserve, which like an unexhaustible spring, still supplies fresh matter of talk. In like manner how carefully do we avert any hurt or mutilation of our *own bodies*, and yet how barbarously inconsiderate are we of *others*, to whom we do the greatest out-rages, rather than use any violence to our passion, or restrain an angry Humour: only I confess there is one Instance, wherein though we are *unjust*, we are not so *partial*; but expose our selves also; and that is in the case of *Duels*; a barbarous custom wherein 'tis hard to define, whether the

the Wickedneſs or Folly be greater; yet it maintains its way in ſpight of all the methods God has us'd to make us better or wiſer: Of this there are too many, and too noted inſtances ſince our reſtoration, as if we were ſo enamour'd of *deſtruction*, that when we are prevented of it from our *Enemies*, we ſeek it from *one another*; or thought *publick Peace* ſo intolerable, that when 'tis caſt upon us (as ſure ours, if ever any may be ſaid to be) we are fain to take in private quarrels, as our reſcue from that dull quiet, and court the utmoſt *miſchiefs*, to avoid the oppreſſion of the greateſt *happineſs*. Thus perverſly do we countermine Gods purpoſes of kindneſs; and when he has ſecur'd us, ſolicitouſly ſeek to be deliver'd from our ſafety; project new *dangers*, and dare his power with a yet harder Task, the *delivering us from our ſelves*: And whilſt we thus avert our quiet, 'tis no wonder that we produce no better effects of it; nor fructifie under that, which we will not permit our ſelves to enjoy.

AND as upon this general view, we appear very ill managers of our Peace, ſo ſhall we much more, if we reflect on thoſe many particular bleſſings which are wrapt up in that, of which we make ſo perverſe uſe, that we therein no leſs violate *Sobriety*, than we have already appear'd to do *piety* and *righteouſneſs*; ſo filling up the meaſure of our iniquity by tranſgreſſing all the fundamental rules of Chriſtianity, *living* neither *ſoberly*, *righteouſly*, *nor Godly in this preſent world*, *Tit.* 2: 12. And of thoſe *advantages* which are the appendages to Peace, there are two moſt eminent; *Plenty* and *Liberty*, both of which are the more remarkable in our preſent quiet, by how much the deprivation of each was the greater. For the firſt, we know the *late times of rapine*, had torn from many among us their whole ſubſiſtence, ſo entirely deſpoil'd them that they were reduc'd to *Jobs* condition and connected the two extreme points of Birth and Death, by a middle ſtate of the like nakedneſs and deſtitution: and to ſuch, our late *reſtoration* was a kind of Civil *reſurrection*; rais'd them like *Eliſhas* dry bones, from the moſt hopeleſs ſtate, and by a ſucceſſive poſſeſſion of their own *Inheritances*, made them *heirs to themſelves*. And though all were not ſo wholly diveſted, yet like thoſe *Canaanites* whom the *Jews* did not extirpate, they were put under Tribute: and while perſons who knew ſo well how to exact, were *Lords Paramount*, a bare being

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was all could be expected; they seem'd rather Stewards than owners of their *fortunes*, and had rather the trouble, than advantage of their *Managery*: And who would not think that this so long want of plenty should have taught us sobriety in the using it? That *desuetude* should have worn out the skill of *luxury*, and we should not have known how to be riotous: but alas, our memories have been too faithful to us in this particular; no one of our vanities is fallen into oblivion, but on the contrary the art of Voluptuousness so improved, as if all the time that was lost from the *Practick*, had been spent in the *Theory*, and we had for so many years been contriving new kinds and degrees of excess. Indeed it is too sure, we retain'd the *affection*, when we had lost the *power* of rioting; and 'tis not our prosperity seduces us, but we it. For as the *Sun* though it lends its rays to the begetting of the vilest *Insects*, yet makes no such production but upon apt matter, *slime* and *putrefaction*: so neither would the most opulent fortune make us sensual, did it not find us dispos'd and prepar'd for it. How forcible those *propensions* are, appears by the multitude of *objects* on which they work; For they had need be strong Inclinations that take in all Opportunities, nay, possibilities of actuating themselves, and such 'tis evident ours are, there being nothing capable of ministring to luxury, which we use not to that purpose. Our *Meat* is no longer apportioned to our Hunger but our Tasts: so that the *Stomach* is made merely passive in the matter of Eating; serves only to receive those loads we charge it with, whilest its Elections and Choices are forestall'd by the *palate* or *phancy*; nay, 'tis not permitted so much as a negative voice, not allowed to refuse what is either for kind or quantity destructive to it: We do with studied mixture force our reluctant appetites, and with all the Spells of *Epicurism*, conjure them up that we may have the pleasure of laying them again. Thus unworthily *treacherous* are we to Nature, which while we pretend to *relieve*, we *oppress*, by giving her not only beyond her need, but sufferance: And to shew we are no less dexterous in mixing *sins* than *meats*; our very *Pride* (though in it self an intellectual vice) mingles with our *Gluttony*; every thing is insipid that is not costly; and it is thought an ignoble Peasant-like thing to eat a plain meal: Nor is he now to be lookt on as a Gentleman, whose single Ordinary costs not as much as would be

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(and himſelf would perhaps ſome years ſince have thought) a fair exhibition for ſome whole families. And that we may not be charg'd with *partial intemperance*, we go not leſs in that of drink; wherein we are ſo nice and critical, that 'tis become a ſpecial skill and faculty to *judge of liquors*: But how great ſoever our *curioſity* be, 'tis ſure our *exceſs* is greater, and does not only over-match but ſupplant it; there being no drink ſo unpleaſant, which the love of a debauch will not reconcile us to. So great a malice do we bear to our *reaſon*, that to oppreſs it, we are content to expoſe our darling, and do violence to our very *ſenſe*. How unhappily predominant this bruti∫h Vice is, need not here be told, ſince it too evidently atteſts it ſelf to every mans obſervation, it no longer ſeeking the ſhelter of night and darkneſs, but impatient of ſuch delay, appears in the broadeſt light; and he is now a *ſlow-paced drunkard*, that has not finiſht his *courſe*, perhaps begun another, before the *Sun* has ended his: nay, ſo is the Scene chang'd, that *ſobriety* is become a reproachful thing; ſuch as even thoſe who value it dare not own, and are either driven to *preſerve* it by ſhifts and artifices, or elſe chuſe to *abandon* it rather than hazard the ſcandal. And certainly this is the great advantage this ſin has for the propagating it ſelf; for 'tis impoſſible *Beſtiality* ſhould be ſo univerſally agreeable to mankind, that all ſhould purſue it out of *appetite* and liking: 'tis this Fear that engages many in it; and though it hath too many *voluntiers*, yet ſure 'tis this *preſs* that helps to make up its *numbers*; which as it ſpeaks the great baſeneſs of thoſe who are thus aſham'd both of Piety and Humanity, and had rather ceaſe to be *men*, than appear to be *Chriſtians*; ſo is it a ſad indication of National impiety, a fatal Symptome that we have near fill'd up the meaſure of our iniquities, and are ripened for the woes denounced againſt thoſe who *call evil good, and good evil*, *Eſai* 5: 20. which ſure was never more palpably done than in this inſtance, wherein *temperance* is branded for *ill nature*, and dullneſs of humour; whilſt the moſt *ſwiniſh exceſs* muſt paſs for *ſociableneſs*, *friendſhip*, and *hoſpitality*; names which have been ſo long proſtituted, that they have loſt their native uſe, and men have forgot thoſe very diſtant things to which they originally belong'd: yet ſure ſuch once there were; God made us *ſociable creatures*, and we might ſtill continue ſo upon the ſtrength of that firſt principle, and need not

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ow our *intercourſe* to our *debaucheries*; no, nor our friendſhips neither, which have been ſo far from being preſerv'd that way, that there is nothing more obviouſly, and frequently violates them; nay, indeed the whole ſpecies of *real* Friendſhips ſeems to be extinct, ſince this *fictious* ſort took place. Men think it enough (as indeed 'tis too much) to damn themſelves with their friends, and all other communications are tranſmuted into that of Sin; for we daily ſee thoſe, who cleave the moſt inſeparably in this kind to each other, will yet neither do, nor ſuffer any thing elſe: And ſure if this be *friendſhip*, 'tis ſuch a reverſt kind of it, as muſt have as prepoſterous a *Definition*; for none that have yet been given by *Divines* or *Philoſophers* will fit it. The like may be ſaid of *hoſpitality*, which ſure is in its proper nature of a very diſtant make from this; deſign'd to *relieve* Strangers, not *burthen* them; to cure their wants indeed, but not by the worſe exchange of a Surfeit: So that the *ancient* and the *modern* Hoſpitality differ as much as that of *Melchizedeck*, from that of *Circe*: the one refreſhes, the other transforms: And how great a ſhew ſoever of liberality this later may have, yet he is not to be thought to have drunk *gratis*, that has paid his *reaſon* for his *ſhot*.

AND to both theſe parts of Intemperance, our Uncleanneſs bears full proportion; the one *makes proviſion for the fleſh*, and the other *fulfils the luſts thereof*. To how brutiſh an impudence this ſin is grown is too viſible: we need not trace men into their privacies and receſſes, themſelves willingly proclaim their guilts; nay, dread nothing ſo much as the opinion of being innocent: yea ſo out-dated a *virtue* is modeſty now become, that even that Sex, to which it was once accounted the greateſt ornament, have put it off, look on it as a piece of *Ruſticity*, and *countrey breeding*: whether this pulling down the *fence* be an Indication they are willing to lie *common*, I ſhall not determine: but ſure that very free and confident behaviour now in uſe, is too apt to invite aſſaults, and takes off all that Extenuation of crime, which was wont to be allowed that Sex, upon the ſuppoſition of their being ſeduced? Thus do we publiſh our Sin as *Sodom*, and if we conſider how much boldneſs it has gain'd ſince the return of our *proſperity*; 'twill be probable that ours alſo has been fomented by *fulneſs of bread, and abundance of Idleneſs*, *Ezech.* 16: 49. That our Plenty is very ſub-

ſubſervient to it, appears by the *vaſt expence* wherewith many men manage this vice: And that our Idleneſs is ſo too, is no leſs evident by the *large portions of time* that are ſpent in thoſe purſuits, it being, as the great deſign, ſo the eſpecial buſineſs of too many mens lives. As for the *remedy* which God has aſſign'd, it ſerves now only to exaſperate the diſeaſe. Marriage with too many only advances ſimple fornication to adultery, and ſuperadds perjury to uncleanneſs; thoſe ſacred bands are like *Sampſon* Withs, broken upon every aſſault of the *Philiſtines*, and the very thought of being confin'd makes men more apt to range: For alas, 'tis not their *needs* but their *Phancies* they are to provide for, and that is ſo endleſs, that the greateſt liberty of *Polygamy* would never ſatisfie it: the ſame quarrel would lie then to multiplied wives, which does now to ſingle; I mean, that they were their own: And how numerous ſoever their *flock* were, 'twould not ſecure their poor neighbours only *Lamb*; eſpecially when 'tis conſider'd, that in this they gratifie two ſins at once, their *vanity* as well as their *luſt*; their complacence in *undermining* the Husband, being generally as great, as that in *enjoying* the Wife. And if *Pride* abſtractedly and in its own nature be, as *Solomon* ſays, *an abomination to the Lord*, certainly when 'tis thus complicated, it muſt be infinitely more ſo, and aſcertain a concurrence of thoſe *Judgements*, which are ſingly threatned to each of thoſe *Sins*? what thoſe are, I wiſh guilty perſons would ſeriouſly ponder, and then they would ſurely think their momentary pleaſures much over-bought. But alas, ſuch a faſcinating ſin this is, as allows men no liberty of conſideration, they go on as the *wiſe-man* ſays, *Prov.* 7: 22. with the ſame ſtupidity that an *Ox goeth to the ſlaughter*: or, *a fool to the correction of the ſtocks*; and while every body elſe obſerves the Effects of their Vice in their waſted *bodies*, and ruin'd *eſtates*; themſelves are the laſt that diſcern it, purſue the *courſe* till the very laſt remains of ſtrength and wealth are exhauſted, and nothing left them but *diſeaſe* and *beggery*. Of the truth of this, there have been too many ſad examples, though it ſeems not yet enough, to give caution to others.

AND to theſe *luſts of the fleſh*, we ſpare not to add thoſe of the *eye* alſo; for ſo ſurely we may properly call all thoſe *Luxuries* which adapt themſelves peculiarly to that Faculty; ſuch are

are the *gaiety* of Apparel, *richneſs* of Furniture, and all the *ſplendor* of Equipage which has no propriety to any other ſenſe, but that of *ſeeing*, and is loſt if it be not lookt on: And though theſe ſeem to differ much from that *Covetouſneſs* which *S. John* is ſuppoſed to comprehend in that Phraſe, the one being the *tenacity*, the other the *profuſion* of Money; yet they are but ſeveral branches of the ſame Sin, and are diverſified only by a various application to the *Object*: for in ſtrict ſpeaking, he that covets Gold and Silver to lay on his *back*, is as properly *covetous*, as he that deſigns it only to fill his *coffers*. But beſides the propriety theſe *exceſſes* have to that title, they have no leſs claim to that enſuing, *The Pride of Life*; it being evident that they are both effects and Fomenters of Pride: and ſure this ſets but an ill Character upon them, that when the *Apoſtle* has divided all the *luſts* of the World into *three ſorts*, theſe bid ſo fair to *two* of them. I would not here be underſtood to condemn that Decency and moderate Expence, which agree to the ſeveral ranks and qualities of Perſons, there being not only a *lawfulneſs*, but ſome kind of *civil neceſſity* for ſuch Diſtinctions: nor is the levelling principle fitter to be admitted in Habit, then that in Title or Eſtate: That which I accuſe is quite another thing, it being that inordinate profuſion, which does not only exceed the ability and fortune of the Perſon, but the proportion of his rank and condition; and ſo confounds that diſtinction it ſhould preſerve, and levels us the wrong way: it being more tolerable that all ſhould be *Peaſants*, than all *Lords*. And this is the irregularity that many ſeem to affect, there being not only an emulation of pomp and bravery among equals, but thoſe of the moſt diſtant qualities, there ſeeming now no other *meaſure* than the utmoſt extent of their *money* or *credit*; the latter whereof is often ſo ſtretcht, that it not only cracks it ſelf, but by an unhappy contagion, breaks thoſe it deals with, and like a *Granado* tears Towns in pieces: The many ruin'd Families of *Tradeſmen* do too ſadly atteſt this: would God our *Gallants* would conſider how unequal it is, that many ſhould want *neceſſary cloathing*, only to maintain the *ſuperfluity* of theirs; an Injuſtice which not only upon a *religious*, but *politick* account deſerves the ſevereſt Reproof, and ſince *Divine* Laws will not reſtrain it, 'twere well if *Humane* were provided: though I confeſs,

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'twere not eaſie to find out penalties to deter thoſe, whom the wants ſo uſually attending theſe exceſſes will not diſcourage. This ſort of *vanity* was once thought peculiar to *women*; and though I cannot ſay that the ſexes have exchang'd faults, (becauſe each ſtill keeps its own, together with thoſe of the other) yet 'tis evident they have communicated them; and as the *women* of this Age have tranſcrib'd *Maſculine* Vices, ſo the *men* have *Feminine*; this particularly, wherein they ſeem fully to anſwer the Copy, they being as Critically knowing in all the myſteries of vanity, and as diligent in reducing their *ſpeculations* to *practice*, as any the moſt extravagant female. Indeed both the one and the other purſue this *folly* with ſo great an expence of Care, Time, and Money, as if to be fine and happy were the ſame thing, and their *bodies* had been deſign'd for their Cloaths, rather than their *cloaths* for their Bodies.

AND now when all theſe luxuries are to be ſerv'd, it had need be an exorbitant plenty that ſhall ſupply them; and that will unfold the riddle ſo frequent among us, of ſo many being poorer ſince they recovered their eſtates, than when they wanted them: Our *revenue* how large ſoever, is ſo clogg'd and incumber'd with our *vices*, that they moulder away, and only ſerve to carry other mens with them, by giving credit to run in debt. There are indeed no ſuch unmerciful *exactors* as our own Luſts; the one gleans after the other, till they induce ſuch a ſcarcity, as the Prophet *Joel* deſcribes, 1: 4. *That which the Palmer-worm hath left, hath the Locuſt eaten, and that which the Locuſt hath left, hath the Canker-worm eaten, and that which the Canker-worm hath left, hath the Caterpillar eaten:* So that in effect, we have only changed our oppreſſors, and are as much or more exhauſted by our own ſins, as we were before by other mens; with this woful circumſtance that we have the *guilts* as well as the *ſufferings*: Thus do we rob our ſelves, and create *want* in the midſt of all that *abundance* God has given us, uſing our plenty as the *Benjamites* did the *Levites* Concubine, *Judg.* 19. force and proſtitute it, till we deſtroy it; and the ſimilitude holds in this alſo, that what we thus violate is not our own; for let us fancy what we will, certainly our *ſuperfluities* are more the *poors* Right than *ours*, aſſign'd to them by God the grand Proprietor. So that our Exceſſes have, beſides their proper *guilt*, that of *injuſtice* ſuperadded; and when the

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cry of the *poor* ſhall be joyned to thoſe of our riots, they will certainly be too clamorous to let vengeance any longer ſleep.

THIS is the account we can give of our *plenty*, and that of our *liberty* is not much better; 'tis not long ſince that *arbitrary tyranny* expir'd, which gave us no other *meaſures* of our duties or puniſhments, than the *will* or *avarice* of the Impoſers: And then how did we gaſp to be under the conduct and Protection of *known determinate Laws*? Yet now we have them, who conſiders them, or is regulated by them? Between the *licentiouſneſs* of Inferiors, and the *remiſneſs* of Superiors, they are rendred things only of *form*, not *uſe*; for while the one violates, and the other connives, what can they ſignifie? And though there be never ſo many *new* Laws made to aſſert the *old*, yet we ſee they ſerve for little but to partake of the ſame contempt with the others, and are but like the *Chimæras* of an *Utopian State* ſagely contriv'd, but to no purpoſe. 'Tis the execution of Laws that gives them a real and effective being, and without that, amidſt our great volumes we are yet deſtitute, and may too probably experiment the truth of that *Axiome*, that *'tis better to live where nothing is lawful, than where all things are.* Indeed if we remember how the Statutes of *Omri* were kept, with what a tameneſs the ſevereſt Impoſitions of the *late Uſurpers* were ſubmitted to, we have reaſon to think, *coercion* is the ſureſt Principle of *vulgar obedience*; though withal it ſets but an ill mark upon us, who know ſo much better how to be *ſlaves*, than *ſubjects*. And as we are reſtor'd to our *civil* Liberty, ſo as a branch or conſequent of that, we are to our *perſonal* alſo: We were lately in the condition Chriſt foretold to *S. Peter*, carried by others whither we would not, *Joh.* 21: 18. but now we gird our ſelves and go whither we will; and alas, what uſe do many of us make of this *freedom*? Is it not viſible, that neither our publick or private affairs are the better attended? But on the contrary we are in a reſtleſs purſuit of impertinent or vicious *paſtimes*, go pilgrimages to our *pleaſures*, wander about from this ſport, that meeting to another, till many of us forget we have any other concerns in the World, and are as much ſtrangers to our own homes, as when we were forcibly detain'd thence: And for ſuch I know not whether the former reſtraint be not eligible, to be a

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priſoner being a kind of reſcue to him, that would otherwiſe be a *vagrant*.

THESE are the *uſes* we make of thoſe *advantages* whereof God has repoſſeſt us. I know 'tis too envious a task to diſtribute theſe accuſations to every Rank and Order of men among us; I have here given them in the lump, and wiſh that not only ſuch *degrees*, but each *perſon* would adapt to himſelf his *peculiar ſhare*, wherein contrary to other *dividends*, I fear the only Immodeſty and Injuſtice too will generally be, for every one not to carve liberally for himſelf. However, 'tis ſure in the groſs they make up the *Character* of a moſt barbarouſly *ungrateful Nation*. God was pleaſed to return our *peace*, before we had forſaken our *ſins*, as if he meant to try our ingenuity; that we who had been ſo much worſe than beaſts under the former method, that no ſtripes would diſcipline us, might have this advantage to redeem our credit, and be drawn with theſe cords of a man: but we have put off not only *piety* but *humanity*, and are equally untractable to all methods. And now who can refrain from *Moſes's paſſionate Apoſtrophe*. *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe! Deut.* 32: 6. Unwiſe indeed, that from the moſt benign *purpoſes* of God, extract nothing but our own *miſchief*: are the poorer for his Liberalities, and the worſe for his Goodneſs; by a prepoſterous uſe ſo wear out our Bleſſings, that they ceaſe to be, at leaſt to be *Bleſſings*: And if they once fall from that, there is no middle form for them to aſſume; they convert into the direct contrary, and become the fatalleſt *Curſes*, more heavy than thoſe which were originally deſign'd as ſuch; that degeneration adding malignity, and no *Fury* being ſo extreme, as that which bottoms upon repell'd and *irritated Love*. Gods *mercies* are like thoſe *pictures*, which according to the different poſition of the beholder, carry different Repreſentations; if we will ſtill ſtand on the wrong ſide, and not take them in their more *amiable* appearance, we ſhall find they can put on a *dreadful*: his Goodneſs will not be finally unoperative; if we will not permit it to lead us to *repentance*, 'twill drive us to *deſtruction*. I am ſure we have all reaſon to expect he ſhould exert his power as eminently againſt us, as he has done for us; unleſs perhaps he ſees that is not neceſſary to our ruine; for indeed let him but ſtand by and not interpoſe his omnipotence for

for us, he may trust us to be his *Executioners*, our Vices having a *natural* as well as *moral* Efficacy to destroy us. And who knows whether that be not the reason of his seeming connivence, that he forbears to strike us, to give us up to those more fatal wounds we inflict on our selves; this alas, we have too much cause to fear, for 'tis sure, 'tis not our *innocence* that gives us Impunity, but 'tis more than probable 'tis our *incorrigibleness*; that God gives us over with a *why should ye be smitten any more?* Will not prostitute his Judgement; but as the basest of *Malefactors* leave us to the basest of *Executioners*, and let our iniquities become our ruine. This as it is the severest purpose God can entertain towards us, so 'tis our most important concern to avert. And, O that we, who have so perversly resisted all the designs of his *love*, would now try to defeat that of his *anger*, rob him of those intestine avengers within our own breasts, those *fleshly lusts which fight against the Soul*, 1 *Pet.* 2: 10. which do not only provoke, but execute his Wrath, and make us more miserable than *Hell* it self could do without them; and God knows 'tis more than time for us to seek an escape from so *formidable mischiefs*: O let us not contract one minutes delay, let us cast our selves at the feet of our offended God, and as those who are condemn'd to disgraceful Executions, use to petition for some death of less Infamy, as a *boon* and *favour*; so let us beg, that he will please to think us worth his *own correction*; that whatsoever we suffer from his hand, yet that we may not (like to *Herod*) be deliver'd up to the loathsome fortune of being devour'd by our own putrefaction. In a word, let us form *Davids choice* into an importunate *prayer*, and earnestly beg that we may *fall into the hands of God, and not into the hands of men*, at least not of *our selves*, who are more to be dreaded than all our other *Enemies*.

INDEED till we do thus, our prosperities are far from real, and do in this justifie our most mutinous repinings, that we are never the better for them, nay, much the worse; yet since 'tis only we that have enervated them, th-y will stand upon our account in their proper weight and value: When our *receipts* are summed up, God will charge us with them, not as those empty *useless things* we have made them, but as those great and *solid blessings* he intended them. And certainly

this is moſt deplorable ill managery, to reſerve nothing to our ſelves but the *burthen* and *account* of our good things; to enjoy nothing, and yet be anſwerable for all. In ſecular things men uſually pay with ſome regret for thoſe things, of which they have only anticipated the *uſe*: But with what diſmal reluctances ſhall we come to pay for theſe, of which we have made no *advantage*? And muſt therefore pay the dearer becauſe we have not; it being not ſo much the things, as our employing of them to our benefit, whereof God will exact account. His *anger* is then only incens'd, when we reſiſt his *love*: and his only quarrel to us is, for fruſtrating his deſign of making us happy. And ſure thoſe well deſerve his wrath, that will provoke it on ſuch terms; yet ſo perverſe is the *choice*, as of all ſinners in general, ſo eſpecially of *this Nation* at this time, who have all before us which might make us happy in both worlds, if we did not Madly affect to be ſo in neither. God grant we may recover the Sobriety to make *wiſer elections*, before it be out of our power to make any, and we be found to ſtand to the miſchiefs of our own wild Option.

THE Reader will perhaps think I have gone beyond the limits of a moderate digreſſion; but the too great *copiouſneſs* of the Theme, muſt be my *excuſe*: ſuch over-grown Vices cannot well be drawn in little; and where there is ſuch a multitude, the moſt ſuperficial view of Each, is rather proportional to a *diſtinct Tract*, than to the *few Pages* it has borrowed in this. My greater fear is, that the event may prove it impertinent, there being not much hope that a *private whiſper* ſhall be heard by thoſe, who are deaf to the *loudeſt calls* of Heaven, and have made no other *uſe* of thoſe various and ſignal Providences we have been under, than to defeat the *deſign* of them.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

A Survey of the Mischiefs arising from Disputes in general.

THESE are some of those many artifices, whereby Satan like a cunning *Picklock*, slily robs us of our grand *treasure*, the power and efficacy of our Christianity, and leaves us only the empty *Casket*, the name and formal Profession; that which serves only to make us *proud*, not *rich*; *Confident*, not *safe*: And God knows, so many are daily thus befool'd by him, so many fall as preys to these his *Stratagems*, as might one would think, glut the eagerest malice, and supersede all farther designs: but so insatiate is this grand Devourer, that *retail-prizes*, though never so frequent, do rather enrage than satisfie his *appetite*: He is Enemy not only to this or that man, but to *mankind* in gross, and therefore as if he fear'd that even his malice might not prove indefatigable enough for so many distinct pursuits, he contrives more compendious methods of destruction; frames such *Engines* as take off whole ranks, nay troops; compounds such active *Poyson*, as like a Pestilence, kills multitudes at once. It is too trivial a Mischief to annoy the *outward parts*, it is his Mastery to spread an unseen venome in the *Bowels*, thence to diffuse it self throughout, mix with the vital spirit, and convert that *kindly heat* which should animate, into those wild *irregular flames* which ravine and consume. And this is done by that Pestilential spirit of *division*, that heat of *disputation*, which has for so many ages possest and wasted the *Catholick Church*; and by an unhappy kind of Magick transform'd the zeal of Christian *practice* into an itch of unchristian *Dispute*; made the *questions* about our *Creed* more numerous than the *letters* of it; and by multitudes and contrariety of *Paraphrases* so confounded and obscur'd the *Text*, that what was anciently the badge and *tessera* of Christian Communion, serves us for no other purpose, but as an occasion of breaking it.

SO long as the Church retain'd the *simplicity* of Christian doctrine, lookt on her *faith* as the Foundation of her *obedience*,

and endeavour'd to propagate to her Children ſuch an underſtanding of the one, as was moſt apt to promote the other: She happily made good the title *Chriſt* gives her, *Can.* 6. of his *Love*, his *Dove*, his *Undefil'd* one; but when the *Serpent* had once got into this Paradiſe, infus'd his *ſubtilties*, and nice intricacies into mens brains; and left that ſhould not be ruinous enough, his *venome* alſo into their Hearts: Then began all thoſe unhappy *Metaviorphoſes*, in compariſon of which, thoſe of the Poets are as *trivial* as they are *fabulous*: Then that *faith* which was once inſeparably joyn'd with the *patience* of the Saints, forſook that tame company, and linkt it ſelf with the moſt contrary qualities of *wrath* and *bitterneſs*; and thoſe whoſe Profeſſion it was to *reſiſt* unto bloud, ſtriving againſt ſin, *purſued* to bloud thoſe that reſiſted them in any of their ſpeculations: Then that paſſive valour which had rendred them ſo venerable to their Heathen Enemies, converted ſome, tired out others, and amaz'd all; ſadly degenerated into that active malice, which from *perſecuted Chriſtians*, entitled them to that monſtrous ſtyle of *Chriſtians perſecutors*. And that *ardent love*, which had offered up ſo many Holocauſts to God, was ſupplanted by that *fiery hatred*, that made no leſs acceptable oblations to Satan.

THIS miſerable and deſtructive *change* was ſo much the intereſt of the Enemy of Souls, that we cannot wonder he ſhould ſo ſtudiouſly promote it; and indeed never did he at once ſo approve his *malice* and *ſubtilty*, I would I could not ſay ſucceſs alſo, as in this *deſign*; in compariſon whereof, all his other Projects ſpeak him but a Puny; this is his one *Goliah ſtratagem*, whichhas ſerv'd him not only to *defie*, but even *defeat the Armies of the living God*.

NOR is his Sagacity more obſervable in the *choice*, and main drift of the Deſign, than in the *ways* of Effecting it. had he brought into the *Primitive* Church thoſe large ſcrolls of diſputable points, wherewith he has filled the Modern; that more charitable Age muſt needs have ſtartled and diſcern'd that that *ſeeming Jealouſie* for Truth, was indeed nothing but a *real deſign* againſt Peace; and would ſurely never have parted with that ſacred *depoſitum*, that precious legacy ſo lately bequeath'd by Chriſt, for thoſe vain janglings, thoſe School-ſubtilties which now entertain the World. But as he

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that would divert a man from the *guard* of some important Treasure, alarms him in some other of his greatest *interests*; so he at first raises up *Heresies* of the greatest magnitude, whose blasphemous consequencies so shook the whole Fabrick of Religion, that what was *Uzzahs* Rashness, seem'd then every mans advised Duty, to *put his hand to the upholding of the tottering Ark*. How could those who had been baptiz'd into the faith of the blessed Trinity, suffer the *Arians* to rob them of the Second Person, the *Macedonians* of the Third, the *Valentinians* and *Manichees* so to despise the First, as to set up against him a Rival principle of being? How could those who had so solemnly renounc'd the World, the Flesh and the Devil, see them all bowed to by the temporizing, unclean, idolatrous *Gnosticks*? These were such invasions as seemed to commissionate all that could wield the sword of the Spirit to take it up and engage in this Warfare. But all this while 'twas a sad *Dilemma* to which the Church was driven; if she gave countenance to these *seducers*, she betrayed her *faith*; if she entred the *contest*, she violated her *unity*; the one would undermine her *foundation*, the other would make a breach in her *walls*.

AND the Devil was too old an Artist to lose the *advantage*; he knew well, that even just and necessary *defence* does by giving men acquaintance with War, take off somewhat from the abhorrence of it, and insensibly dispose them to farther *Hostilities*: and therefore he fail'd not to provide *sparks* for that matter, which was now grown so combustible; nor did he always send them from the *bottomless pit*, but sometimes borrowed fire from the *Altar* to consume the Votaries, and by the mutual collision of well-meant *zeal*, set even Orthodox Christians in a *flame*. A memorable instance of this was the *dispute about Easter*; wherein while the veneration they had of the glorious Resurrection of *Christ*, prompted them to commemorate it in the exactest manner they could, the *Serpent* creeps into this Paradise, and though they had the same common end, yet on occasion of some little dissenting in the way, the heat of *devotion* insensibly degenerated into that of *contention*; and by being very tenacious of a circumstance of that *celebration*, they lost the more essential requisite, that of *Charity*; kept the Feast indeed, but with the leven of malice, and absurdly commemorate the redintegration of his *Natu-*

ral Body, by mutilating and dividing his *Myſtical*. So likewiſe in the buſineſs of Rebaptization, while one ſide in a pious abhorrence of *Hereſie*, thought the ſtain like that of Original Sin, could not be done away by any Purgation leſs ſolemn than that of Baptiſm, and the other in a juſt reverence of ancient *cuſtom*, and jealouſie of *innovation* oppoſed it; the Diſpute laſted till the Scene was changed, and thoſe who deliberated of the manner of *receiving* Hereticks into the Church, were themſelves as ſuch *turn'd* out of it. No leſs well meant were the *Originals* of the *Novatian* and *Donatiſt* Hereſies, and as equally unhappy were their *iſſues*: For in them all, when bitter *Zeal* was once fermented, through its aptitude to receive, and the Devils vigilance to adminiſter occaſions, the *Orthodoxy* or Hereſie of lives ſoon became terms out-dated, and men were meaſur'd only by *opinions*: That *ſword of the ſpirit* which was at firſt deſign'd againſt vicious practices, had its edge turn'd againſt *ſpeculative* notions; in ſo much, that at laſt like that of *Joab*, 2 *Sam.* 20: 8. it had got ſuch an aptneſs to fall out, that it was always a ready inſtrument of Execution, till even a Philoſophical point, as that of the *Antipodes*, was reſolv'd with an *Anathema*; and not to know the Syſteme of this *preſent* World, made forfeiture of that *to come*.

BUT alas, theſe, though great defections from Primitive unity, were but modeſt eſſays, and feeble aſſaults, compar'd with thoſe which infeſted the ſucceeding ages: This *root of bitterneſs* was then but a *probationer* in the ſoil, and though it ſent forth ſome off-ſets to preſerve its kind, yet *Satan* was fain to be at ſome pains to cheriſh and nurſe them up; placed them under the ſhadow of the *Sanctuary*, and got them like the treacherous Ivy, ſupported by that *piety* they were deſign'd to deſtroy; but it was not long ere they had got firmer rooting and ſtrength, not only to propagate, but multiply. Every Diſpute in Religion grew *prolifical*, and in ventilating one queſtion, many new ones were ſtarted: And as *queſtions* grew numerous, ſo did *Sects* too; every Opinion almoſt conſtituted a new party, and thoſe again ſubdivided into many others; ſo that of all the firſt Violators of Primitive unity, we ſcarce find any, who did not revenge their *Schiſm* upon themſelves, by ſeparating one from another, as they had

had all done from the *Church*; till at laſt the progeny both of Sects and Opinions grew ſo numerous, that he who would exact an account, muſt be ſent like *Abraham*, to the Sky or to the Shore; the Stars or Sands being as apt a ſubject of *Arithmetick* as they. Whence it is brought to paſs, that *Satan* now may leave his toilſom labour of compaſſing the Earth; men do his buſineſs for him, giving him leiſure to be only a Chearful *Spectator* of their *Divinity-prizes*; the bloudy combates of *Eccleſiaſtick Gladiators*.

AND that he may be ſecur'd never to want that pleaſing divertiſement, the *later Ages* have been careful to train him up *Combatants*, it being now become a diſtinct ſort of Learning, a new Species of Divinity, to raiſe nice *queſtions*, create new *difficulties*, branch out with fond *diſtinctions* our holy Faith, which the pious Simplicity of the firſt Chriſtians, receiv'd to practiſe; not to read upon us an *Anatomy*, unbowel and diſſect to try experiments, much leſs to bring into the *Theatre*, there made to fight and bleed, to ſhew men ſport, and try the skill of the unhappy ſword-men, the Maſters of defence. *The form of ſound words*, which in its native frame and conſtitution was moſt enlivening and ſalubrious, diſſolv'd and melted by *Chymical preparation*, ceaſes to be nutritive; and after all the labours of the *Alembeck*, and hopes of an *Elixir*, inſenſibly evaporates, and vaniſhes to Air; or leaves in the recipient a foul *Empyreuma*, or fretting corroſive. An endleſs dotage about names and words, and then as endleſs a quarrel for them, appearing the commenſurate *effect* of the long ſtudies of thoſe *Diſtillers* in Divinity, who boaſt its Sublimation.

IT is indeed a thing worthy of the greateſt both wonder and lamentation, to ſee how the plaineſt, and moſt *ſimple propoſition*, when it falls into the hands of theſe *Artiſts*, is mangled and dis-joynted, is rarified, exalted and refin'd: He whoſe leiſure, or indeed whole life, would ſerve him to ſurvey all the ſubtil Diviſions and Diſtinctions of the *Schoolmen*, would ſure reſolve, they had the power of working *Miracles*; *Queſtions* in their hands multiplying in the breaking, like the *loaves* in our *Saviours*. But ſure the event of the Miracles are very deſperate, no ſolid nouriſhment being deriv'd by the one, but on the contrary, Stones given us inſtead of Bread,

and thoſe too for the worſt purpoſes, even to fling at one another, as if becauſe *ſtoning* was the death of the firſt Chriſtian *Martyr*, we deſign'd his *Charity* to the ſame fate with himſelf; that *divine Goſpel grace* having ſince fall'n under as thick a ſhowre, and with this ſharp aggravation too, that whereas he ſuffered from *Jews*, *Chriſtians* are become its *executioners*: whilſt thoſe who pretend to be *Champions* of the Faith, Irrefragable, Angelical, and Seraphical *Doctors*, not only fill the Church with quarrels whileſt they live, but bequeath them in their writings to poſterity; as *Ziſca* is ſaid to have done his skin, to be made an Incentive to war and confuſion.

IT was the policy of *Julian* to ſhut up the Fountains of humane learning from the Chriſtian youth, leſt they ſhould there gain ſuch acuteneſs, as might render them the more formidable Adverſaries to *Paganiſm*: but could he have foreſeen that they would have employed thoſe Weapons not againſt the *common Enemy*, but *one another*, he would ſurely have revers'd the Stratagem, freely opened thoſe *Magazines* whence they might furniſh themſelves for their mutual ruine, and have as ſolicitouſly *promoted* their Learning, as ever he *obſtructed* it. I am very far from abetting their arrogant folly, who either decry humane learning in general, or make it ſuch a *Moabite*, or *Ammonite*, that however it be admitted in *civil Converſe*, muſt be interdicted the *Sanctuary*. Our Religion preſcribes us rational not bruriſh Sacrifices, and therefore deſpiſes not any of thoſe *advantages* which may improve our reaſon, exalt the *man*, and depreſs the *beaſt* in us: yet ſure we ſhall derogate very impiouſly from Chriſts prophetick office, if we allow not Divinity to be the Supreme and nobleſt Science; ſuch as is to be ſerv'd and attended, not regulated and govern'd by thoſe inferior: but that juſt order ſeems now to be inverted; *divine* learning is brought down to *humane*; the *Simplicity* of Chriſtian Doctrine ſo perplext and confounded with *Philoſophical nicetie*s, that *Plato* and *Ariſtotle* are become the Umpires of our Religion, and we muſt go ask *Heathens* how far we ſhall be *Chriſtians*. Thoſe *deep things of God*, as the *Apoſtle* calls them, 1 *Cor.* 2: 10. and of which he pronounces the natural man an incompetent Judge, are yet brought before *that Tribunal*, ſubjected to be ſcann'd by rules of Art: but alas, our line is too ſhort to ſound thoſe Depths. Men raſhly undertake

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to understand *incomprehensible*, to order *infinite*, define *ineffable* things: and then no wonder if their conceptions differ; for where there is no visible truth, wherein to Center, *error* is as wide as mens *Phancies*, and may wander to Eternity; while multitudes run careers in the dark, it is not strange to have them justle, and overthrow each other.

AND doubtless were the *Controversies* which have so long harased the Church throughly examin'd, many of them would be found of this nature. And *humble belief* has been judg'd too sluggish and dull an exercise for men of acute parts, and therefore they would not take *faiths word* that so it is, unless *reason* will be her *surety*, and shew them how; but sure it had been much for the *peace* of the Church and *safety* of Souls, if Mysteries had been permitted to be *Mysteries*; that those sublimer parts of our *faith* had been entertain'd with more veneration, and less of *disquisition*, and that while even the learned'st do acknowledge them to be *Abysses*, they would not confute that confession, by attempting to *fathom* them. But alas, so prepostorous has been the procedure, that those things which were indeed inexplicable, have been rackt and tortur'd to discover themselves, while in the mean, the plainer, and more accessible *truths*, as if despicable while easie, are clouded and obscur'd; so many subtile *queries* rais'd about them, that the *Theorick* of Christianity is become harder than the *Practick*; a Grace is much more readily acquir'd than defin'd, and that *key of knowledge* which should give us entrance into the closets and recesses of religion, is by so much tampering and wrenching made *useless*; serves only to bustle us at the door, and so in effect proves rather a *bar to keep* us *out*, than a *key to let* us *in*. Thus perverse are the *contradictions* of humane deprav'd nature; which like our *first Parents* take it unkindly, that God has reserv'd any thing from us, and boldly attempt to break down his *enclosures*, to rob him of his *peculiar*; and yet in the mean time, as industriously contrive to rob our selves of our own, by cancelling both parts of Gods distribution, neither leaving *secret things to the Lord our God*, nor *the revealed ones to us and our children*, *Deut.* 29: 29. Certainly the first propagators of our Faith, proceeded at another rate: they well knew that not the *brain* but the *heart* was the proper *Seat* or

that celeſtial Plant, and therefore did not amuſe their *Proſelytes* with curious queſtions, but ſet them to the active part of their religion. We ſee what brief and plain inſtructions *S. Peter* gives his *Catechumeni*, Acts 2: 38. *Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remiſſion of ſins*: and this it ſeems as a full preparation for the gift of the Holy Ghoſt, which he there promiſes upon theſe only conditions. This was that vigorous Seed which at once *ſprung up* ſuddenly, and *rooted deep* too, and produc'd the liberal harveſt of that day: but ſure had thoſe three thouſand ſouls been Catechiz'd by our modern *Caſuiſts*, we had ſeen a wide difference, not only in the expedition but ſucceſs. In like manner we ſee *Acts* 8. how ſhort a Creed qualified in *S. Philips* judgement for the Eunuchs baptiſm: and we find *S. Paul* whoſe education enabled him for the ſubtileſt definitions, yet delivers his whole doctrine in this *compendium*, Acts 20: 21. *Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; and 'tis obſervable how he introduces this with a profeſſion that *he had kept back nothing that was profitable for them*, Verſe 20. and ſeconds it, Verſe 27. with another, that *he had not ſhunned to declare unto them the whole counſel of God*; from whence 'tis obvious for the ſhalloweſt diſcourſer to infer, that the whole counſel of God as far as it is incumbent for man to know, at leaſt *neceſſitate medii*, is compriz'd in that one breviat of Evangelical truth: and certainly whilſt all the *diviſion* of theſe generals, was the diſtributing them into *practice*, they were found moſt fertile ſeminaries of all Vertue; but when they came to be *dichotomiz'd*, and cantonn'd out into curious aerial notions, they loſt their *prolifick* nature: that fruitful land became a wilderneſs, a wild and intricate maze, where men ſooner loſe *themſelves*, than find either *truth* or *holineſs*.

WHEN Chriſtianity firſt atteſted it ſelf by *miracles*, it produced in the hearts of its converts, a firm aſſent to the truth of the *Doctrine*, and an awful reverence and adoration of *that God*, who had given ſuch power unto men, awaking them to an Enquiry after *duty*, ſo to propitiate that *omnipotence* whoſe fury it appear'd impoſſible to bear: And this ſure was a much more *genuine effect*, than if they had buſied themſelves in thoſe many *unprofitable curioſities*, nice, yet bold enquiries into the divine attributes which now a-days ſerve only to ſupplant that pious veneration we ow to them.

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IN like manner the comprehensive enunciation of *Christ*, *Mar.* 16: 16. *He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damn'd*, was received by the first Christians, as the condition on which the two so distant states of Salvation or Damnation depended, and accordingly excited their diligence, to attain the *one*, and avoid the *other*. And this certainly was a much more concerning employment, than to have entertained themselves with the modern dispute, whether some antecedent decree of God had not irreversibly determin'd them to the one or other; a *disquisition* that has serv'd only to keep us *Idly busie*, set our heads a working, but folds up our *hands* like *Solomons* sluggard in our bosoms. So also when *S. Paul* affirms it the design of *Christs giving himself for us, to purifie to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*; the *Primitive* Christians had no other design than to comport with that his purpose; to be what he died to make them, and to attest their *Zeal* to good works, by being actually *rich* in them. They took *Christs* word, that *he that gave the meanest dole for his sake, should not lose his reward*; thought themselves sure enough upon his promise, and never disputed the proportion either of Worth or Congruity between the work and wages; and had the *Modern* done the like, our *works* had not so unhappily evaporated into *words*; we had talkt less and done more.

'TWERE easie to draw the Parallel through all the points which busied the devotion of the *first* Ages, and the curiosity of the *latter*: By all which it would be evident, how much Christian doctrine has *lost* in its Efficacy, since it *gain'd* in its Bulk; how we have embased our *Coin* by multiplying it; and have divided our *sum* into so many, and so small Fractions, as our *Arithmetick* can scarce *number*, never *unite*. We should think him very ridiculous, that should hope to advance his *crop*, by grinding the *corn* he sows; yet, methinks, this has been the Method of our Spiritual husbandmen, who have scarce suffered one grain of our faith to escape Entire. 'Tis said that the *Ant*, when she lays in her Winter stock, bites the ends of the *Corn*, as being *Naturalist* enough to know that will certainly prevent its sprouting. And sure that little contemptible creature whom *Solomon* appoints to preach *industry* to the *sluggard*, may in this point read *Philosophy* too, to our

greateſt *Doctors*; convince them that the ſeed which they mangle with ſo many Diſtinctions and Diviſions, will never ſpring up into Chriſtian *practice*: It will rather be like the *Dragons* teeth, *Cadmus* is ſaid to have ſown, whoſe immediate production was a *hoſtile band* combating one another. A *fable*, which, God knows, we have found too ſadly *moraliz'd* in our School-contentions, only with this unhappy difference, that ours are more *immortal*; our *Serpentine* breed fight but never die, oppoſe but deſtroy not one another.

AND then 'twill not appear ſtrange to ſee the firſt ſeeds of diſcord ſo prodigiouſly encreas'd, that they now over-ſpread the face of the Earth: for, whereas in all other things there is a ſucceſſion, one generation goes and another comes, and ſo though the *ſpecies* continue, the *Individuals* periſh; theſe ſeem to have the accurſt Priviledge of propagating and not expiring; and to have reconcil'd the procreativeneſs of *corporeal*, with the duration of *incorporeal* Subſtances: This is ſuch an advantage toward their *multiplication*, that we may grieve, but cannot wonder to find them *ſwarm*; not like *Bees* to bring profit, but like *Locuſts* to devour every green thing in the land; nor is it now in the power of all the *Magicians of Egypt* to caſt them out: for were it poſſible ever to become *Satans* intereſt to ſuppreſs them, he would certainly find himſelf in the caſe of one of his young Conjurers, to have *rais'd* more ſpirits than he could *lay*. Mens now *irritated Paſſions*, and formed intereſts, the great fomenters of diſputes would prove too *ſtardy Devils*, even for *Beelzebub* himſelf to Exorciſe.

BUT 'tis too ſure his Kingdom will never ſo divide againſt it ſelf; it ſuits not only with his *Nature*, but with his *Ends* to perpetuate our Strifes, and therefore as if our doctrinal debates were not enough to ſecure his purpoſe, he has an auxiliary troop of ritual differences to attach us. The *Leproſie* which infeſts the ſolider parts of our Religion, has paſt from the *Body* to the very *Garments*; the moſt exterior *adherencies*, Habits, Geſtures, Days, every thing that has but the remoteſt ſubſerviency to Piety, are become the *objects* of fierce Conteſts, and have ſo encreas'd the number and heat of our quarrels, that 'tis unneceſſary, perhaps impoſſible to add more; if he can but keep up theſe, as God knows, he is too like to do, his Kingdom will be competently guarded,

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they being his greatest *security* against that *power of Godliness*, that vital force of Christianity, he so much dreads: that they are so, is obvious enough to him that takes but the grossest consus'd view of them. But that we may better discern the degrees of his *advantage* and our own *mischief*, 'twill not be amiss to consider them more attentively, make some distinct observations, not of *all*, for that were endless, but of *some* of their most eminent *Effects*, which we shall find so pernicious and destructive, as sufficiently speak their relation, and subserviency to the great *Abaddon*.

AND in the first place, if we consider them only *privatively*, as they supplant and justle out our greater concerns, we shall find them sadly mischievous, indeed to such a degree, that were they not chargeable with any *positive* ill, they were by this their mere *negative* Force, competent Instruments of our *ruine*. Did they actually convey no venome, yet while they substract our nourishment, their effects will be sure to be deadly; *Grace* as well as *Nature* being liable to be starv'd as well as poysoned. *Christianity* is not a dull unactive, but stirring busie State, and therefore we still find it in the *Gospel* represented under the *Metaphors* which imply the greatest Industry and Activity; 'tis a *trade*, a *watch*, a *race*, a *combate*, and it assigns us tasks enough to justifie the propriety of the *Tropes*: And therefore as on the one hand, the sleepy Professor will at last find he has but dreamt of those glorious Rewards he expects; so on the other, he that frames himself another *Scheme*, that labours, but not in Gods vineyard, that busies himself in things extrinsick to that one great *Sphere of motion*, the Evangelical Precepts, will finally discern that he has but rolled *Sysiphus* his stone, espous'd a *toil* under which he may indeed be *weary* and heavy *laden*, but will never find *rest* to his Soul.

AND then what can be more perfectly adapted to his aim, who desires to propagate his own eternal restlenes unto us, than thus to commute our tasks, exchange these *pleasant and gainful ones*, which God assigns us, for those *uneasie* and *fruitless*, we impose on our selves? 'Tis true, we find too many of those unprofitable works of darkness to busie and employ us: but I think no one, nay, I am apt to say not all others together, have proved so effectual to his purpose

as this of raiſing and maintaining *parties in Religion*. 'Tis too uſual a policy of States to ſecure themſelves from the *fear* of a potent Neighbour, by fomenting a civil *diſcord* in his Kingdom: *Satan* has in this inſtance found it a lucky Stratagem, it having proved the moſt powerful revulſive of his danger. I will not examine, whether he borrowed it from, or lent it to our *Machiavilians*, but ſure he may from his own experience recommend it with the atteſtation of a *Probatum eſt*.

INDEED this art of diverſion gives him a full ſecurity againſt all he fears in our Chriſtianity, for 'tis not the title he envies to us, or dreads himſelf; we know he long ſince had courage to contemn the name even of Chriſt, when invoked by thoſe whoſe practices joyn'd with him in defying it; while we are but *Jewiſh Exorciſts*, make no other uſe of Chriſt, but to get us a reputation and a trade, he can deal well enough with us. *Seven Sons of Sceva* are not half ſo terrible to him as *one S. Paul*; 'tis him only he fears, that to the *form* has joyn'd *the power of Godlineſs*: That *Exorciſm* he knows he cannot reſiſt, and therefore has very dexterouſly found a way to divert it, by engaging us in thoſe contentions which allow us not to think of the practical part of our profeſſion: By the *confus'd noiſe* of Battel, quite drowning that *voice behind us*, which ſays, *This is the way, walk in it*. Nay, by this ſubtilty he does not only divert, but foreſtal alſo; like the *Philiſtines*, allows no Spear or Sword that may be us'd *againſt him*, but takes up all thoſe Inſtruments by which we ſhould work the *work of God*. We know to all affairs of Importance there are three neceſſary *concurrents*, without which they can never be diſpatcht; *Time*, *Induſtry*, and *Faculties*: and the more weighty and difficult the Buſineſs is, the greater Degree of each of theſe is requiſite. Now certainly the *intereſt* of our Souls is not the ſlighteſt *concern* we have: the avoiding eternal *miſery*, the acquiring endleſs *bliſs* is not ſo trivial, or ſo eaſie a matter, as to be the Work of a *moment*, the purchaſe of ſome few *yawning wiſhes*, or *volatile phancies*: He who is to diſpenſe the Rewards, has propos'd us other Conditions, aſſign'd us Work which takes up no leſs *time* than that of our *whole lives*; no leſs *intention* than of our *whole powers*: And then if we ſuffer any thing elſe to interpoſe, and defaulk what is thus entirely requiſite; if we cut new *Channels* for that

that which should run in this one *full current*, 'tis easie to divine what the event will be: For man being finite both in his nature and operations, the time and attention he bestows on one thing, must necessarily be substracted from another. And therefore if our Disputes about Religion entertain and busie us, they must unavoidably interrupt our attendance on practick Duties; and so whilst we quarrel with *one another*, give our great *Master* too just ground of quarrel with *us all*, by neglecting the great, and indeed only Business entrusted to us.

NOW indeed that our contentions do thus divert us, is too apparent to any that shall consider it in any of the three forementioned particulars; for, first for our *time*, they do not only *insensibly* steal away much of it (a modesty which most other diversions do still retain) but *Magisterially* exact it, and accordingly have large parcels of it solemnly and avowedly devoted to them; the *scanning old questions*, and *raising new ones*, having been the profest Business of many mens lives; their very Vocation and Trade wherein they have arrived to such *eminence*, as shews they made *liberal oblations* of their Time to it: And of this every age has left so many Records, as the mere reading them would allow few vacant minutes to the succeeding: And had not *time* a little reveng'd his own quarrel, and consum'd many of those *writings*, by which himself was wasted, the *Hyperbole* would not be very extravagant in this case, which we find warrantably us'd in another, *John* 21. that even *the world it self could not contain the Books which have been written.* As it is, there are more than enough to employ, nay, devour *time*; for when men once launch into the vast *Sea* of Controversie, they are tossed there endlesly, and seldom recover a *harbour*, Difficulties like *waves* crouding one upon the neck of another; And accordingly we see in *Polemick Disputes*, how every rejoynder swells bigger and bigger, till like the Prophets *cloud*, from a *hand-breath* it over-spread the *Heavens*: every little Manual becomes the Parent of vast Volumes; and unless the evil cure it self by majoration; unless the greatness of the task bring in despair to supplant curiosity, and keep men from reading, the *spectators* will have as little respite, as the *Combatants*; both Writers and Readers will be so engrost, that they will have little leisure for any thing else.

And

And I dare in this appeal to any that have engag'd deep either way, whether they have not found it experimentally true: I wish they would but snatch some broken parcel as a *plank* from the common *shipwrack* of their time; rescue a few minutes for a sober reflection, and audit what real Profit accrues to them from the expence of so many precious Hours; how much it advances that grand business for which their Time *here* was allotted, and according to which their Eternity *hereafter* will be awarded: always remembring, that if it promote it not, it hinders it, by diverting that *time* which should have been so employed: And indeed there cannot be a more comprehensive *mischief* than this of the *loss of time*, it being that which virtually contains the frustrating of all other Advantages, whereby we should work out our Salvation. The operations even of *Christ* himself were, he tells us, limited to a certain season: *I must work the work of my Father whilst it is day, the night cometh when no man can work*; and if the Night overtake us, it matters not how we are stored with instruments of Action, since they all at once then become useless. Our Laws anciently set a greater *penalty* upon the stealing *Beasts of breed*, than on other Cattel of the *same species*, as calculating the damage by the possibilities of which the owner was robb'd. Time is the *universal womb* of things and actions; and therefore when we lose *that*, we suffer an accumulative prejudice, forfeit our *Rights in reversion*, as well as our *Possessions*, our *capacities*, as well as *enjoyments*. As in an Abortion the unhappy Mother, besides the frustration of her hopes, and child birth pains sustain'd, acquires an aptitude to miscarry for the future, and never to be able to bring forth a vital birth: And thus, God knows, multitudes of *Embryon*-purposes perish, and the misery of it is, they are our best that do so. We generally pursue our *frivolous projects* with an *active vigour*, but keep our great and concerning *affairs* only in design till *death* come and surprize us, which like the *fatal Metamorphoses* the Poets talk of, fixes us in the posture it finds us, and so presents us to *Judgement*. Now I would know of the most eager Contender, whether he would not chuse then to be found with his hands stretcht out in *prayer* to God, or *alms* to the poor, rather than dealing *blows* amongst his fellow servants; if he would, certainly 'tis his concern to put himself

self into that form he would then appear in, to husband his little span of time so, as may stand him in stead when time shall be no more.

BUT if men will needs be *improvident*, yet why will they be *ridiculous* too? If they will barter away their time, methinks they should at least have some ease in exchange, but to be industrious ill husbands, to lose all their *advantages*, and none of their *toil*, is such a solemn piece of folly, as is at once matter of Scorn and Wonder; yet this is the very case here; our *wranglings* do not only exhaust our *time* but our *strength* too: We pursue them with so vehement an intention, as if our Faith propos'd not to us any other victory, but over this sort of Opponents: We run our selves breathless in this *race*, where the *prize* is only a few *fading Leaves*, or what is more transitory, a little *popular applause*; and make not towards the incorruptible Crown, till we are grown too feeble and decrepit for the other pursuit. Men macerate their Bodies, and waste their Spirits in *Polemick studies*, prescribe themselves no time of discharge from that *War*, till they are able no longer to wield their *weapons*, and then, when mere Impotence makes them *peaceable*, begin to cry out of *contention*, snatch up *Devotion* when Controversie begins to be too heavy for them, and at their Death *pray for that peace* of the Church, which they have made it the business of their life to *disturb*. This as it sufficiently attests what mens thoughts are in their cool bloud, what apprehensions they have of the way when they draw near their journeys End; so does it abundantly evince the unspeakable prejudice Piety receives from our Disputes; Those have the active and *vigorous Abettors*, while That is turn'd off to languishing *bed-rid Votaries*. So that the *division* between these two, is like that of the *Cattel* between *Jacob* and *Laban*, all the stronger to the one, and feebler to the other: Would God the scene were not in one respect chang'd, and that the *Syrian* had not here got the better share. But in the mean time what greater advantage can *Satan* wish for, our strength and industry is diverted upon these forcign expeditions, and *Sion* is left to be guarded by the lame and the blind, such only as are not able to follow the Camp, and then 'tis not strange to see what successful assaults he has made, that that true *practick virtue* which once made such victo-

victorious falleys on the heathen World, is now baffled in its own Quarters, beaten from its Works, and driven to ſeek ſhelter in obſcure corners, immures it ſelf in ſome few private breaſts, and ſo like an exil'd Prince, makes only ſhift to *live*, when it ſhould *reign*. But alas, ſhall we for ever ſuffer our ſelves to be thus befool'd, ſhall this his ſtale ſtratagem after ſo many hundred years uſe, nay, and detection too, loſe nothing of its Efficacy? Muſt we always waſte our ſtrength in forging ſhackles for our ſelves? This is ſuch an infatuation as *Hoſea* ſpeaks of, *Chap.* 9: 7. *The Prophet is a fool, the Spiritual man is mad*: Would God, we would once put our ſelves under the diſcipline of ſerious recollection, it might perhaps cure the Phrenſie: Let him who has with unwearied diligence watcht all advantage againſt his *Antagoniſt*; rack'd and tortured every period of his diſcourſe, to make it confeſs an abſurdity: Let him, I ſay, conſider, how much better that *Induſtry* had been employed in diſcovering the *fallacies* of our common Adverſary, that old Sophiſter, who puts the moſt *abuſive Elenchs* on us, whileſt we are moſt buſie in putting them one upon another. Good God! how might true vital Chriſtianity at this day have flouriſht, if we would have beſtowed our pains the right way? At how much a cheaper rate might we have *cheriſht*, than we *deſtroy* her? All parties pretend to be very careful of this *Vine*, are very buſie in ſetting traps for the *little Foxes*, all whom they are pleaſed to call *Hereticks*; and in the mean time take no care of the *wild Boar*, let that not only ſpoil her *branches*, but ſtock up her *roots*, ſuffer the moſt ſavage beſtial vices to deſtroy both Power and Form of Godlineſs together. Thus unhappily do we divert our intentions from our moſt important concerns. And as *Archimedes* is ſaid to have been ſo vehemently intent upon a *Geometrical figure*, that he heard not of the taking of the City, till an Enemy gave him his *information* and *death* together: So do we ſo buſie our ſelves in drawing our ſeveral *Schemes* of Religion (every of which will pretend to no leſs than *Demonſtration*) that in the mean time, that which alone is *true Religion*, is expos'd to the fury of the Enemy, ſack'd, ruinated, and like the plough'd up *Jewiſh Sanctuary*, not one ſtone left upon another. Certainly moſt the *queſtions* which at this day diſturb Chriſtendom, have *in reſpect of their matter* no Propriety toward the

the propagating good Life, but, *in reference to their way of managery*, all aptness to hinder it; how much were it then for our *ease* as well as *profit*, to turn us into the plain road, where none of these Thorny difficulties will encumber us? Alas, why should the *Romanist* so sweat to maintain his *Purgatory flame*, as if he already felt its heat, and would in this World antedate those pains, when the same Industry bestowed here to *purifie himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, would substract the matter of that *Fire*, and leave little for that *furnace* to refine; which were doubtless a much securer way, even according to his *own principles*, than to trust to the uncertain devotion of *others*, to fetch him out when once deeply ingulpht: 'Tis surely much better to starve that Fire by ones own *innocence*, than to leave it to be extinguisht by the Tears and Piety of *surviving friends*. Why should the *Socinian* so eagerly contend for the possibility of keeping the Law, when *one example* would convince more than a *thousand arguments*. Let him bend his study to make himself an instance of his own doctrine; and then though he do finally fail in proving his *Hypothesis*, yet, if he do his utmost, he will not fail of a better *triumph* than that which the Schools can give: and so will even from his error extract advantage, his very *straying* will by a happy *Antiperistasis*, lead him into the *way*. Why does the *Predestinarian* so adventurously climb into Heaven, to ransack the celestial *Archives*, read Gods *hidden Decrees*, when with less labour he may secure an *Authentick transcript* within himself; let him according to Saint *Peters* advice, *Add to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance*, &c. and that chain of virtues will stand him in much more stead, than if he could as infallibly (as some have confidently) demonstrate every link of *Predestination*: 'Tis the assiduous *practice* of Duty will make his calling and election sure; and unless he can confute that divine *Axiome*, that *without holiness none shall see the Lord*; he cannot but confess he may more profitably busie his thoughts in labouring to become holy, than in disputing whether he can chuse to be so or not. Or lastly, why do we *Christians of several perswasions*, so fiercely argue against the *salvability* of each other; as if it were not only our Opinion, but our Interest and our Wish, *that all should be damn'd, but those of our particular Sect*; when God knows,

knows, not only every Society, but every ſingle perſon has enough to do, to *work out his own ſalvation*, which if we will take the *Apoſtles* word, is to be done *with fear and trembling*, *Phil.* 2: 12. A temper very widely diſtant from that of cenſuring and judging. And ſure we ſhould not think that *malefactor* more meriting, or more likely to be acquitted, who ſhould leap from the *Bar* to the *Bench*, and there condemn the whole Gaol but himſelf. 'Twas a ſober and Chriſtian *reply* of a late learned Gentleman, who being askt by one whether a *Papiſt* might be ſaved, anſwered, *You may be ſaved without knowing that*. And would we confine our cares and enquiries to thoſe things which concern that one great Intereſt, we might take *leſs pains*, and yet do *more work*; be leſs *buſie-bodies*, but more *fruitful Chriſtians*, and then ſure 'tis time we ask our ſelves the *Wiſe-mans* queſtion, *Eccleſ.* 5: 16 *What profit hath he that laboureth for the wind?* And at laſt give over this unthriving diligence, and not ſo emulate the moſt ſtupid of Beaſts, as to make our ſelves burthens, only that we may couch under them.

AND were this only *Iſſachars* lot, 'twere the leſs to be regretted, but alſo *Zabulon* herein invades his portion; 'tis they that handle the *pen of the Writer*, that have engroſt *this error*, and will not ſuffer it to be a *Plebeian* one. None do ſo much this way miſ-employ the two vulgar talents of Time and Induſtry, as thoſe who have a third ſuperadded to them, that of Extraordinary Faculties and endowments, which they do as prodigally laviſh as either of the former. The Beginners or Abettors of *contentions* have generally been Perſons of the moſt *acute refind wits* and *excellent learning*, which has enabled them for thoſe quirks and ſubtilies, of which groſſer underſtandings would have remain'd more happily ignorant. A ſtrange production, that the *greateſt beauties* of Nature and Art, ſhould ingender the *fouleſt deformity* in Religion. Thus alas, have *Satans* altars the pre-emption of *Gods*, the fatteſt Oblation brought to feed the fire of *contention*, whilſt that of *devotion* expires for want of Nouriſhment. It was indeed no wonder, that the blind zeal of *Pagans* had made him ſo wantonly nice, that none but the choiceſt victims would ſerve his turn: none but an *Andromeda* and an *Iphigenia*, Royal and Virgin ſacrifices propitiate his infernal Deities: but that among *Chriſtians* he ſhould ſtill have the *ſame Election*, have the richeſt trea-

treasures of those, who say they war against him, laid at his feet, have his choicest weapons out of his Enemies magazine, is a riddle that can scarce be solved, but by concluding *Idolatry* has only chang'd its *form*, and that he sits as securely enshrin'd in *mens passions* and animosities, as ever he did in an *Idol Temple*; so that he seems rather to have lost the *pomp*, than the *power* of Regiment. But admit, that he were not herein so immediately Gods rival, that these *speculative debates* had none of those adherencies, which do so directly gratifie him, yet still he is secur'd of gaining somewhat at rebound; for alas, when mens faculties are thus employed, what Weapons are there left for the defence of true *practick vertue*, and God knows, she needs them but too much: Mens *lusts* are grown subtle Disputants, so that the most improved *reason* may find work enough to manage the Contest; And surely would men of parts timely have bent their endeavours this way; vice could not have got so strong a party. Men are ashamed to be *Proselytes* to a weak Arguer, as thinking they must part with their *reputation*, as well as their *sin*: and certainly nothing is a more general *discouragement* from Piety, than the *opinion of its Votaries* not being Persons of Parts, and exalted Understandings; a Prejudice as old as the time of our *Saviour*, as may appear from *Joh.* 7. Would God our greatest *Rabbies* would sadly consider how much they have contributed to this scandal, while by laying out their parts on *Polemick nicetie*s, they have neglected the more weighty part of their business, and given too much Attestation to that scandalous Maxim, that *Ignorance is the Mother of Devotion*: Certainly this is quite to mistake their *Commission*, which is not that of a *Herauld*, to proclaim War amongst men, but that of an *Embassador*, to reconcile them first to holiness, and by it to God: And doubtless *one soul* gain'd to Piety, would more promote their account, than *many thousands* secured to a Sect or Party. We find how sad the doom was of that Servant who wrapt up his Talent, but we have no cause to think it would have been at all easier, if he had melted the Talent into bullets, to maintain the skirmish with his fellows: Whether that be not the case of some who have received not the *one* Talent but the *five*, I leave it to be discussed between God and their own Consciences; but in the *interim* 'tis sad to see how unhappily men engage their

endeavours,

endeavours, which ſeems to repreſent the reverſe of *Eſays Prophecy*, we have beat our ploughſhares into ſwords, and our pruning hooks into ſpears, all the inſtruments of fertility and growth in *Grace*, into Engins of *War* and *diſcord*; and then it muſt needs be a moſt deplorable condition to which Chriſtianity is reduced; which ſeems in this to be under the ſame calamity, which her diſtreſt profeſſors ſuffer from the *Turkiſh* tyranny, whilſt her hopefulleſt and moſt pregnant Children, are like *Janizaries* aud *Timariots* trained up to fight againſt her. And let none wonder that I call it fighting againſt her, when yet perhaps none of them do formally renounce her; for that Circumſtance only determines the War to be *inteſtine*, not *foreign*; and if our own ſad Experiences had not too much qualified us to judge, I might appeal to the univerſal vote of mankind, which of thoſe were the moſt deſtructive. Indeed were there no other act of hoſtility diſcernable, but that which we have hitherto inſiſted on, the intercepting her ſupplies, the cutting off from her that time, induſtry and gifts whereby ſhe would be nouriſht and ſupported, that were irreparably injurious to her, and conſequently moſt grateful to that grand *Enemy*, who, as hath been ſhew'd, makes advantage of our Wranglings, or Diſſentions *with one another*, to reck his more inveterate Malice *on us all.*

CHAP. X.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Diſputes, as they ſupplant Charity.

BUT alas, the miſchief of theſe debates can never be deſcrib'd by bare *negatives*, there are multitudes of *poſitive* ills, that inſeparably adhere to them, and thoſe of ſo deſtructive a force, that if Chriſtianity were *beleaguered* and *famiſht* by the former, ſhe is *ſtorm'd* and *batter'd* by theſe, and ſo is aſcertain'd to ſink under all the methods of ruine. In the front of theſe we may well rank thoſe diſplacencies and animoſities which are the product of our ſpeculative differences, and which do indeed ſo naturally reſult from them, that 'tis

not

not to be hoped so long as the *one* continues, that the *other* will ever cease. For though in *practice* we often see a bewitching Sin dethrone the Reason, and make men act as if they had no such superior principle to guide them, yet in matters of *Speculation* their *affections* are generally strongly influenc'd by their *understandings*. We do not only approve, but love those notions wherewith we are prepossest, which kindness as it propagates it self to the *abettors* of the same Tenets, so also it insinuates dislikes to the *opposers*. And as that opposition advances, so the disgust does too, till at last the Scene shifts, and the *Persons* are at a greater war than the *Opinions*. But we need not thus derive a proof from the *causes*, when the thing does too demonstrably attest it self by the *effects*; for what issues are there of the mortallest hatred, which do not plentifully flow from this fountain? *Humane nature* we know has but three ways of actuating its passions; by *thought*, by *word*, and by *deeds*; and we may surely conclude the feud very bitter that employs all these Engines, as 'tis too visible this does; for though the *former* of these be in its own nature inscrutable to all but omniscience; yet the *two latter* are, according to *Christs* own Rule, of the *Tree by its fruits*, infallible *Criterions* of them; and those make such liberal discoveries, that I think I may appeal to any who have espous'd a *party*, whether they have not with the first discrimating rudiments of their own Sect, imbib'd a secret *confus'd prejudice* to all others. Nay, I fear there are but few of so mortified passions, as to have stopt there, and not advanc'd to a direct aversion, and alienation of mind. Indeed were it not for this, 'twere scarce possible for so many of the *vulgar*, to be such *Bigots* in their several factions; for alas, their Intellects are generally too *gross*, to have any *clear* apprehension of the Points they contend for; their Leaders only give them some *general confus'd notions*, just enough to excite their *displeasure* against all Dissenters, and then their *anger* must presently be call'd *zeal*, and instead of the more uneasie task of suppressing their passion, this expedient serves at once to hallow and gratifie it: Nay, so ridiculous have some mens prepossessions of this kind been, that they would scarce allow those to be *entire men* whom they thought not *sound believers*, but have phancied I know not what *bodily* as well as *Mental* Monstrosities in those they were

pleas'd

pleas'd to call *Hereticks*; a piece of childish credulity which the emissaries of some factions have not disdain'd to make their advantage of. But these inward disgusts and rancours are but the first bound of this ball of contention, when this leven is once in the *heart*, it will quickly diffuse it self, and both *tongue* and *hands* will be tainted with it. Hence comes it, that disputes in religion are managed with such virulency and bitterness, that one would think the Disputants had put off much of *Humanity*, before they come thus to treat of *Divinity*. The government of the Tongue is a piece of morality which sober nature dictates, which yet in this instance many even of our greatest Scholars seem totally to have unlearnt; For whether we consider the unseemly reproaches, or rigid censures, wherewith almost all parties pursue their Antagonists, we have reason to say with *S. James*, *The tongue is an unruly evil, full of deadly Poyson*: Would God their *guilt* of this kind, did not so loudly proclaim it self, as to supersede the need of *proof*. 'Tis too obvious that the *Satyr* has usurpt the chair, and *Polemick Discourses* are degenerated into *libels* and *invectives*; our Controvertists fall from *arguments* to *reproaches*, as if their Zeal lay more to blast their adversaries *fame*, than confute his *error*; and were this only in personal extemporary debates, it might have the excuse of an indeliberate passion. Indeed it were to be wisht that all words of this sort might vanish in that breath that utters them; that as they resemble the Wind in *fury* and *impetuousness*, so they might do also in *transientness*, and *sudden expiration*: But alas, a course is taken to immortalize them, they become *records*, and our most elaborate *controversial writings*, like the Earth after the curse, overrun with these briers and thorns, Sarcasms, contumelies and invectives filling so many *Pages*, that were those weeded out, many *volumes* would be reduced to more *moderate bulk* as well as *temper*. Nor are our *censures* any thing more modest than our *reproaches*, every petty difference is mutually upbraided to each party as a defection from the faith, so that we scarce know a milder *name* than Heresie, nor *doom*, than Damnation. And as if the visible obliquities of errors would not afford us indictments enough against one another, there is a closer inspection made, every *position* is ript up, and curiously dissected, to see what *Embryo* is in its womb, what

what seeds there are of monstrous productions, which though perhaps the native strength of the Principle would never have *animated*, yet the preter natural heat of an Antagonist can quickly *hatch* them (like the *Chickens* at *grand Cairo*) into life, and vigorous being: and if by a long chain of (perhaps fallacious) Inferences, some such Imputation is fastned upon a *Thesis*, then all who embrace that, are charg'd also with all this *spurious brood*, though they never so solemnly renounce and disclaim them. A practice sure very uncharitable; for suppose such *consequences* never so regularly deduced from my *opinion*, yet so long as I seriously disavow and detest them, I may indeed be thought *unwise* in not discerning the connexion, but sure not *impious*. So that unless want of *Logick* be a *damning sin*, no man can hence be authoriz'd to pronounce me *reprobate*: and I cannot think that God, whose rigor bends against the faults of our *wills*, rather than our *understandings*, and who at the last great assize will assume our own consciences into the judicature upon us, will ever sentence me for those *deductions*, how horrid soever, which I never made mine, or that I shall ever find my self in Hell for a *misperswasion* which I never entertain'd. But there are some whose Censures are not so *artificial*, yet no less *severe*, who beg their *Postulata*, and taking it for granted that such and such are the only sanctified opinions, make them the *Shiboleth* by which to discriminate not only ther *own* Friends, but *Gods* too, lock up Heaven gates against any who bring not that Ticket for admittance; and though they make the way wide enough to receive the most *over-grown Sinner* of their own Opinion, yet they pronounce it impossible to the *strictest piety* of a Dissenter. And upon such grounds as these do we mutually doom one another to perdition, never considering that whilst we so briskly presage *others* Damnation, we really prepare for our *own*. Alas, our eagerness to *heat the Furnace seven times hotter for all that bow not to our dictates*, does but expose us to the fate of *Nebuchadnezzars officers*, *Dan.* 3. to be our selves consum'd in that flame, wherein we cast them. 'Tis indeed to be wisht we would cease to invade Gods peculiar, by judging those that must stand or fall to him: but if we will needs take his *office*, 'tis but equitable we take

his *rules* too; and in our *Wrath* remember *Mercy*: But God be bleſſed 'tis the Judgement of our *upright*, yet *gracious* Maſter, that ſhall finally determine us; and not that of our paſſionate fellow-ſervants: If theſe were irreverſible, and the Key of the bottomleſs pit were in our *cuſtody*, we might give Satan *a Writ of Eaſe*, diſcharge him from his perambulations, he would need no more to walk about as a *Lion*, but might ſtill lie in his *Den*, and we ſhould bring in *prey* enough to glut the Devourer: For could we *execute* all we *condemn*, we might ask the Diſciples queſtion, *Matth.* 19: 25. *Who then can be ſaved?* But as theſe ſevere *cenſures*, are a preſent *violation of Charity*, ſo they tend to the perpetuating it by obſtructing a return to that *unity of Judgement*, which might make up the very *original breach*; for while men reciprocally load each others opinions and perſons with deteſtable imputations, if they really ſpeak what they think, they do ſtill more deeply impreſs upon themſelves the prejudice to that which they accuſe, (*hatred* as well as *love* gathering ſtrength by being actuated:) but if they do indeed not believe their own *charge*, yet having once made it, either upon Intereſt or Paſſion, 'tis not probable they will want *pride* to maintain it; and when we conſider how ruling a *piece of carnality* that is, we cannot wonder if it indiſpoſe men to *retractations*. I wiſh we had not too many, and too late inſtances of ſome whoſe weighteſt *objection* againſt a cauſe, has been their own former *violence* againſt it. When men have once faſtned the brand of Hereſie, Prophaneneſs or Blaſphemy upon an *opinion*, they think they cannot afterwards become its *Proſelytes*, without either ſeeming to *aſſume* thoſe Guilts, or at leaſt that of having *falſly charg'd* them upon others: and the Horns of ſuch a *Dilemma* do ſo gore their *reputation*, that it often tempts to ſalve that with the *wounding of Conſcience*, and perſwades them rather to reject their *convictions*, than expoſe their *credits*. And certainly were this the only ill conſequent of our rigorous accuſations, it would be enough to prejudice them as unfit Inſtruments in a Goſpel-deſign; but though they ſuit not with that work to which they ſolemnly *pretend*, they are moſt accommodate to that they really *produce*: For if we examine in the third place, what *influence* theſe our eager conteſts have upon our *actions*, we ſhall find them fully proportion-

portionable to our *words*. And first negatively, 'tis apparent in too many, that they are apt to confine even the common offices of humanity to their own Sect: and others who do not so, yet shew so great partiality in dispensing them, as discovers the Name of *Christian* is not half so charming, as that of their own *particular Faction*. Were instances of this kind as *needful* as they are *numerous*, 'twere easie to give multitudes: but I think none that has liv'd in our late confusions can have wanted occasions of observing it in *others*, at least, if not in *himself*. But alas, *omissions* are scarce worth our notice, when there are so many *positive Acts* of unkindness so visible among us: They know little of *ancient*, and less of *modern* Times, that are unacquainted with the *mutual persecutions*, which almost all parties have alternately rais'd, one against another among Christians: *Confiscations* and *banishments*, *Gibbets* and *flames*; Weapons God knows much too carnal for a spiritual war-fare, yet much more in use than those *S. Paul* recommends to *Timothy*, *gentleness*, and *meek instructing of Oppossers*, 2 *Tim.* 2: 25, 26. And when 'tis consider'd that those Oppossers too were Heathens, 'twill be more than a little strange, that Severity should be allowable to *Brethren*, which was interdicted against *Aliens*. Is it an easier crime to reject the *entire body* of that Faith which was once delivered to the Saints, than to differ in the explication of some *one branch* of it? Nay, perhaps only of some *corollary* and *deduction* from it, which, as far as it is humane, may be fallible, and therefore can no more command my *assent* than it satisfies my *judgement*; yet this is generally the most that can be affirmed of our differences; For almost what Party is there which doth not avowedly own all that *Faith* which constituted the first *Christians*? Would God, we did as uniformly embrace the Charity too; and then most of our disputes would be superseded, at least so calm'd, that there should be none of those destructive effects which they now produce: For alas, how many funeral piles has this preposterous zeal kindled! So that what some said of *Dracos* Laws, may too justly be applied to our arguments, that they have been writ rather in *bloud* than *Ink*. But as Christ when he forewarn'd his Disciples of the ensuing persecution, tells them, not only they shall be kill'd, but they shall be put out of the Synagogue: So now as if Christians were emulous

of every branch of *Jewiſh* cruelty, we tranſcribe that part of the copy too, and either by cauſleſs excommunicating *others*, or ſeparating *our ſelves*, we deny the benefit of *publick communion* to each other: And this is a greater ſeverity than the former, by how much more implacable our hate is againſt what we count *error*, than what we know to be vice; and by how much the concerns of the *Soul* are more eſtimable than thoſe of the *Body*. The inveteratenes of thoſe Feuds which riſe from Opinion, may clearly be diſcovered in this inſtance: let a man have committed all the *outrages* which may render him unworthy to live; yet when we proſecute him to *death*, we willingly afford him all helps towards his *future ſtate*, and no man is ſo inhumane as to refuſe to pray, either *for* or *with* a Malefactor; yet ſome few *ſpeculative differences* are ſuch a gulph betwixt us, that we cannot meet even in that we all acknowledge our common Duty, *the worſhip of our God*. Certainly among all the accurſed iſſues of our *contention*, there is none more malignant and criminal, than this of *Schiſm* and *Separation*, and would men judge diſpaſſionately, more irrational too: For doubtleſs were our caſe ſtated to any ſober Heathen, he would never be able to gueſs, why they who equally acknowledge the advantage and neceſſity of *prayer*, confeſs the ſame God, have the ſame common wants in this world, and hopes in the next, may not ask in the ſame *form* and in the ſame *place*. Alas, is it not enough to be at diſtance where we *differ*, but muſt we be ſo alſo where we *agree*? Is unity ſo dreadful to us, that we muſt act contradictions to eſcape it? Surely this is a *ſtranger faſcination* of the ſpirit of Diviſion, than that in the Goſpel-*Demoniack*, which enabled him to break all bonds in ſunder, and like it, abhors the approaches of a *Saviour*, crying out, *What have we to do with thee, thou Jeſus the Son of God, art thou come to torment us?* Who knows what a powerful Exorciſm the united interceſſions of the Chriſtian world might have been; had we jointly deprecated quarrels, God might have found a way to have compos'd them, though we could not; and our *tears* might have cemented thoſe breaches which our *diſſents* made, but our *Separation* widens. I know the venerable names of the Sanctions of *Holy Church*, the hundred thirty ſeventh Canon of the Code of the univerſal Church, which ſays in expreſs

expres's terms, Ὅτι δεῖ αἱρετικοὺς ἢ σχισματικοὺς συνεύχεσθαι, *that we ought not to pray with Heretick's or Schismaticks*, and very many warm expressions of the *Fathers* are producible in this case: But till we excommunicate with the Tears and Sorrows, and publick concernment of the primitive Christians, who refus'd all acts of kindness only out of love, and the most ardent Charity, we may by no means lay claim to their pattern, whose estrangements only flow from malice and inveterate hate. Would we indeed comport with the Example of those *happy Times*, we should have fear'd the *guilt of Schism* in ourselves so much, as not to have lightly charg'd it upon others; we should have prayed for the *conversion* of Dissenters, not laid *Anathemas* upon them, and prayed for their *confusion*. *S. Paul* we see, *Heb.* 10: 25. reckons the *forsaking Assemblies*, as a degree, at least preparative of *Apostasie*; and from his time throughout all the purer ages of the Church the holy Fathers have generally branded it as the highest impiety; and no marvel, for it is one of those Gyant-like sins, which not only oppresses *men*, but invades even *God himself*. 'Tis the mangling and assassinating *that body* to which Christ owns an *inseparable connexion*; the putting him to head scatter'd limbs, instead of an entire compact body, as if we meant to refute *S. Paul*, shew him 'tis possible that *Christ may be divided*. Good God! what shall we say when we see Heathen Souldiers estimate Christs *coat* higher than Christians do his *body*: they thought the *one* too good to be parted, but we cease not to tear and mangle the *other*, and which is yet more monstrous, make it *a part of our Religion* to do so. We name our *Opinions* our *Faith*, and when under that Title we have enshrin'd them, *we* make more barbarous Immolations than ever the most *savage Heathens* did. They sacrifice some few objects of their Love, their *Children*, but we sacrifice the very *affection*, and think our Zeal *luke-warm* till it have reduced our Charity to *ashes*. And now if we compare these our *Divisions*, *Wrath*, and *Bitterness*, with those fundamental, Gospel-precepts of *Unity*, *Love* and *Meekness*, we must surely say we have not there so learn'd Christ. And then how ridiculous is it, to pretend a Zeal to that Gospel, whose very foundations we undermine? Peace is at once the *blessing* and *duty* of Christians, and those heats of *speculative* Con-

teſts which violate it, will certainly never ſerve to make us either good or happy. And therefore till Charity ceaſe to be an Eſſential part of Chriſtianity (which certainly we muſt burn our Bibles ere we can ſuppoſe) we muſt conclude, that our Diſputes, and the ways whereby we manage them, how much ſoever they pretend to preſerve, do indeed evacuate and deſtroy true, that is, *Practick* Chriſtianity.

CHAP. XI.

A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Diſputes, as they engage upon Ill Arts and Scandalous Practices, to ſuſtain the eſpouſed Cauſe and Party.

AND yet ſo unhappily are many men miſtaken, that theſe *irregular heats* which thus waſte the vital ſpirits of Religion, are thought the moſt *Soveraign Cordials* to ſupport them. The higheſt *Paroxyſm* of this Fever is deem'd the perfecteſt *Health.* Men eſteem the overflowing of their *Gall*, the exuberance of their *Zeal*; and then all the Promiſes to the *faithful combatant* in Chriſts camp, they confidently appropriate to that their ſo *eminent Grace*; though indeed it can with no more propriety be call'd ſo, than *Pharaohs lean Kine* might be ſaid to be *fat*, becauſe they had devour'd thoſe that were ſo. In plain terms, men lay ſo great weight upon their being of right opinions, and their eagerneſs of abetting them, that they account *that* the *unum neceſſarium*, and think the propagating of thoſe ſo *important a ſervice* to God, as will juſtifie the uſe of the moſt *interdicted inſtruments*, legitimate the moſt *enormous Commiſſions*, that they can phanſie contributive to that pious End: And moreover commute for the neglect of *Practick duties* in the general tract of their *lives*. I ſhall not here urge the hazard of mens erring in the choice of opinions, nay, the certainty that of many oppoſite one only can be the right; and then to all ſuch as miſs that, their very groundwork fails them. I ſhall only confine my ſelf to the *malignant influence* this Perſwaſion has on *practice*, and in that reſpect I cannot but affirm it a moſt *pernicious deluſion*, which as it tends extreme-

extremely to the enhanſing the bitterneſs of our conteſts, ſo it may juſtly be reckoned among the worſt effects of them, and is a moſt *irrefragable proof* how much they obſtruct the vital *efficacy of Religion* in our hearts. Nor is it any new thing for men thus to deceive themſelves; for we find ſuch Confidences as theſe frequently upbraided to the *Jews*, both by the *Prophets* and *Chriſt* himſelf; they thought their *Zeal* to the Temple and ritual obſervances ſo invincibly meritorious, as no *Crime* could defeat, and that their *legal purifications* would render them acceptable in Gods Eyes, in ſpight of all their *Moral pollutions*: But how fallacious a hope this was, the many ſevere increpations of God do ſufficiently atteſt. Yet certainly their guilt was far below ours; the things they ſo depended on were *parts*, though not the *whole* of their Duty; thoſe *Ordinances*, though perhaps ſomewhat *adulterated* by *Rabbinical* mixtures, yet for the main were *inſtituted* by God himſelf, and that with a deſign of diſcriminating and ſeparating them from the reſt of the world; and ſuch peculiarities and priviledges as theſe, might have an aptneſs to excite that preſumption: But alas, the caſe is otherwiſe with moſt of us; they are not the *Revelations* of Gods will, not the *Teſtament* of our dying Redeemer, but ſome *Codicils* and *Annexes* of our own we ſo earneſtly abet. 'Tis not the *Text* (for then 'twere impoſſible for any that receiv'd the ſame Canon of Scripture to differ) but our *gloſſes* to which we pay ſuch Reverence; and when on that account we *ſever* our ſelves from thoſe to whom the Commands of God, the Bloud of our Saviour have moſt cloſely *united* and *cemented* us; we can yet make a ſhift to think that there is ſo much of Sacred in this, as ſhall not only render it highly rewardable, but alſo hallow all other profanations of our lives; and in our *Jehu* march upon ſuch an expedition, can turn all regrets of conſcience (like *Jorams* meſſengers) behind us. That this is ſo, none can doubt who obſerve with what boldneſs men ruſh upon the moſt *unchriſtian ſins*, in purſuit of what they phancy a *Chriſtian cauſe*. Were it not for this *amulet*, how were it poſſible for any to think they may venture upon Perjury, Sacrilege, Murder, Regicide, any thing without impeachment to their *Sainſhip*; nay, to think that the only danger lies on the other ſide, in being *remiſſy wicked*, that to *ſlack* any thing of the

utmoſt ſpeed, is *to do the work of the Lord negligently*. Yet that this has been a prevailing Perſwaſion, we have had too many, and too ſad inſtances; and God grant we may not find them ſo repeated, that our *ſenſe* may ſuperſede the *uſe* of our memories concerning them; nor has this been peculiar to one only Sect; but thoſe who are otherwiſe at the wideſt diſtance unite in this Principle. They are not only *Fanaticks* that can ſay *grace* over the fouleſt *crimes*, and conſecrate them to the uſe of a *good cauſe*; if we examine the *Dypticks* either of Conclave or Conſiſtory, we ſhall find ſome Saints upon that account, who could never have been ſo upon any other. And when we conſider how often *Heaven* has been mortgaged to gain Auxiliaries from *Hell*, how men have been encouraged to the moſt *damning ſins*, by *promiſes* of being certainly ſaved; we muſt either think that a *Holy cauſe* is omnipotent enough to reverſe *Gods decrees*, to *ſave* whom he would *damn*, or elſe that this pretence is one of the moſt ruinous deceits, the moſt fatal Treachery to ſouls that ever *Satan* contriv'd, who though he do in all inſtances play the *Mountebank*, yet ſure never more than when on confidence of this *Antidote* he perſwades us thus to ſwallow down his *deadlieſt poyſon*.

I MUST not here attempt to enumerate all the *unchriſtian practices*, that have on this ſcore been made, not only *lawful* but *meritorious*; yet there is one of ſo frequent uſe, that I muſt needs advert unto it, and that is, thoſe *calumnies* and *falſehoods*, which are now become a piece of *Eccleſiaſtick* as well as *State policy*, and a great part of that offenſive armour wherewith our controvertiſts aſſault one another. Indeed if we conſider how many *forges* are daily going for theſe *Engines*, we ſhall have reaſon to think, all Parties have an high eſteem of their *uſefulneſs*. Of theſe Calumnies there are too many ſorts and degrees to be here particulariz'd: And indeed thoſe, who permit themſelve to uſe any, can be ſuppos'd to have no other *boundaries* than the advantage of their *cauſe*: And accordingly as that ſeems to exact, they lay their *Scene*; ſometimes they traduce the perſons of their oppoſers, and by raiſing prejudices againſt them, hope ſome of it will reflect upon their doctrine: did men generally know how to diſtinguiſh between *reports* and *certainties*, this *ſtratagem* would be as *unskilful* as it is *ungenious*:

genuous: But considering the vulgar temper, it is not unaptly suited to it. This it seems was anciently understood, it being the old Greek advice, διαβάλλειν ἀπλήστως καὶ δάκνειν ἀδιαλείπτως, ὅτι κἂν ἀκριβῶς τὸ ἕλκος ὁ διαβληθεὶς ἰάσηται, ἀεί τι λείψανον ἐνδήσει. *To calumniate stoutly, for that how perfectly soever the wound of reproach be healed, there will remain a scar; and though we wipe away with never so much care the dirt thrown at us, there will be left some sulliage behind*: And accordingly this was the Expedient the *Pagans* us'd against the *Primitive Christians*, to put them thus in the skins of beasts, and shapes of monsters, and then worry them to death. And this is the method still, though heightned and improved; and our *Religion* has suffer'd infinitely more since we us'd it against *each other*, than when they manag'd it against the *whole community*. But besides this *defamation* of Persons, another branch of this black Art is the *depraving* of Writings, both in the sence and very letter, and direct words; for the former of these, whosoever observes the strange perversions, and affected mistakes of mens meanings visible in many of our *Polemick* discourses, will sure resolve that a mans *intentions*, as well as his *words* and *actions* may be calumniated: Nor does the *letter* scape better, every period which threatens danger to the cause must be mutilated and dismembred, and as *Sampson* was by the *Philistines*, lose its Hair and Eyes, and then be made sport for the whole party. And I fear there are too few, who do not in this case take the *Jewish* reparation, an *Eye for an Eye*, &c. retaliate to the adversary the foul play they receive. But some advance yet higher, and think it not enough to make an Argument or Testimony useless to the *Enemy*, unless they draw it over to *themselves*, make it *betray* the side it was to *maintain*, and as a Conqueror uses to restore Arms to such of the adverse party, as will turn to his, so after they have by satisfactions secur'd themselves of its aid, it shall then be made as potent as is possible, and with such kind of *Renegado troops* as these, some *causes* have been much supported. Yet were this *violation* offer'd only to the writings of living men, who might vindicate it, 'twere not so transcendently *ignoble*, but it most frequently falls upon those, who have made their beds in the dust; who have chang'd their own *Form*, and cannot secure their *Writings* from the same *fate*: Nay, 'tis yet more frequently *those*, whom we have all reason to suppose, and most

moſt of us profeſs to believe, *glorified Saints*; and this ſuper-adds a daring preſumption to all other circumſtances of the guilt, and heightens an injuſtice into Sacriledge. It has always been held the moſt deteſtable ſort of *forgery* to counterfeit *Teſtaments*, though the *Teſtator* were of never ſo low a quality, or his *bequeſts* of never ſo mean a value: And ſhall it now paſs for a piece of *commendable dexterity*, an art of manage to falſifie thoſe *writings* by which the Fathers of the Church deſign'd to entail *truth* and *piety*, not *ſtrife* and *faction* upon her? We know, *Necromancy* has juſtly been reputed one of the moſt horrid forms of *Sorcery*, becauſe it enforced *dead* men to ſpeak what the living were inquiſitive to hear. I leave it to be conſider'd what this wants of that, beſides the dreadful *ceremonies* of the Incantation; certainly 'tis a guilt which nothing but our too familiar acquaintance with it could make unformidable. And indeed this whole method of ſerving a *cauſe* by ſuch *ſiniſter means* is ſo utterly repugnant to the Principles even of ingenuous nature, that we can ſcarce caſt a greater ſcandal upon an Opinion, than to ſhew it needs ſuch Aids. 'Tis by *Hiſtorians* branded as an execrable fact in him, who to ſecure himſelf from a *neighbour Prince*, call'd the *Turk* into Chriſtendom: But ſure thoſe who to fortifie their ſide have brought in this Artifice of *calumniating* and *falſifying*, have done an Act no leſs *impious*; the conſtitution of Chriſtianity agreeing full as well with the *Alcoran* as with theſe *Piæ fraudes*; as ſome of them who perhaps mean the *fraud* more than the *Piety* are pleas'd to call them. Nay indeed they accord not much better with *Philoſophy* than *Divinity*, every man knows the nature of contraries is to combate and expel, not to cheriſh and ſupport one another. How abſurd is it then for thoſe, who ſay they deſign to advance *truth*, to make *falſhood* their Inſtrument? I wiſh they would experiment to accommodate their ſecular concerns at the ſame rate, let them *cool* them in the Fire, *warm* them in the Froſt, and *feed* themſelves by perpetual Faſting, and when they find cauſe to commend the efficacy of that Method, they may with fairer pretence in this higher inſtance reconcile the feuds of Reaſon and of Nature, and make a *lye* the Evidence of *Truth*. In the interim, it may well paſs for *Sophiſtry* as well as *ſin*; and doubtleſs whatever advantages are hop'd for to private Sects and Parties by

by this art, Christian Religion in general is hugely prejudiced by it: For when men shall compare the veracity of Heathens with our falshoods; learn from *Historians*, that among the *Persians*, αἰσχρὸν τὸ ψεύδεσθαι νενόμισται, *to lye was deem'd a fault of the greatest turpitude*, and they therefore laid an ill Character upon persons in debt, ὅτι ἀνάγκη τὸν ὀφείλοντα καὶ τὸ ψεύδεσθαι λέγειν, *because he that is so must needs tell lyes*: And when they shall see in the Laws of *Cingis* a barbarous *Tartar*, Lying made a *capital crime*, and yet among Christian *Casuists* made a *holy artifice*, they will be tempted to think our *end* as fictitious as our *way*; and that our Religion has little countenance from *truth*, which is thus fain to make *lyes* its Refuge. Thus unhappily do these Arrows revert, not only on *those* who shoot them, but in the face of *Christianity* it self, which is defam'd, and traduced by those *slanders*, we aim at our *private adversaries*.

BUT besides this *direct*, there are other more *oblique* Ways of making *vice* subservient to *Religion*, or to speak more properly, of making *Religion* subservient to *vice*; for some Zealots of several parties, who more regard the *numerousness* than *purity* of their Professors, discerning how much the sensual part of mankind startles at the strictness of Gospel-precepts, are industrious to take off that discouragement, not by convincing them of the real divine sweetness and pleasantness of them, but by debasing and accommodating them more to the carnal appetite: Yet here men proceed not all alike, some use Christs yoke, as *Hananiah* did that of *Jeremy*, break it quite off; others only essay to slacken and alleviate it, that it may not pinch the lusts of *libertine Proselytes*: Of the first sort are such, as having made the *adherence* to their Party the infallible mark of *Sanctification*, and that Sanctification of *Election*, do from thence proclaim to all who are so qualified a general Jubilee and manumission from the bond even of *Christs* as well as *Moses*'s Law, or if some of them allow it to remain an impotent director, yet while they affirm that *God sees no sin in his Elect*, or if he do, beholds them as a Father does the harmless falls of his Child, rather with *smiles* than *anger*, they make the *violations* of it so safe, that they are too sure to be many, and between abrogating and thus enervating a law, the *difference* is merely verbal.

OF the ſecond ſort are ſome, who by indulgent and partial gloſſes, ſeek to mollifie the ſeverity of Chriſts commands. That contrive for their Clients not the *means* of Obeying, but the *arts* of Eſcaping them. Like the *unjuſt Steward*, teach their Lords Debtors to *write Fifty inſtead of a Hundred*; and decide Caſes of conſcience more according to the *intereſts* and *paſſions* of men, than the *will* of Chriſt. There are a generation of men of whoſe Dexterity in this faculty the world has taken ſo much notice that I need not name them, a ſort of eaſie *Caſuiſts* who ſeem to have erected a *Court of Equity* to relieve men againſt the *rigour* of *divine Law*; and there is little doubt but they ſhall find enough ready to make ſuch *appeals*: Men love to be Chriſtians as cheap as they can, and therefore will cloſe with that party, which offers the eaſieſt terms: And then while theſe ſpiritual *Pioneers* do thus enlarge the narrow way, make it a road as well for the Beaſt as the Man, the *brutiſh ſenſual*, as well as *rational divine* Part of us, no wonder though Sholes of Converts throng in to them. But 'tis to be conſider'd that all this while this is winning Proſelytes to themſelves, not to God; the gaining them to a *Sect*, not a *Religion*; at leaſt not to that pure religion, and undefiled, which the grand Author of our Faith has both exemplified, and propos'd to us; for how much that ſuffers by this way of propugning private opinions, is more than enough apparent. Yet ſo ambitious are our prime leaders of ſuch Trophies, that in order to them ſome are ſaid to aſcend yet a ſtep higher, and beſides this general encouragement they give to mens luſts by *taking off* Reſtraints, do in ſome caſes actually *promote* and *excite* them. For when they ſee a licentious perſon whoſe *acqueſt* they judge beneficial to their *cauſe*, they have artifices of fomenting his riots, do not only take off the *bridle*, but uſe the *ſpur* alſo, hoping that at the rebound it may conduce to their *End*. If any think it impoſſible it ſhould do ſo, let them conſider that among our various Opinions ſome there are which ſell Heaven much cheaper than others dare, that allow ſuch *eaſie attonements* as the moſt *habitual ſinner* need not deſpair of: and then the moſt infallible means to aſcertain ſuch to that ſide, is to make them too bad for any other. For when a man is reſolute to keep his *ſins* while he *lives*, and yet unwilling to relinquiſh

quiſh all *hopes* when he *dies*, 'tis more than probable he will embrace that profeſſion which bids faireſt to the reconciling thoſe ſo diſtant intereſts; and therefore the *greater malefactor* he is, the more ſure he will be *to fly to the horns of this Altar*; the nearer ſinking, the apter to catch at theſe reeds; ſo that the Project is not *impolitick*, though God knows ſo *impious*, that 'tis much fitter for the School of *Machiavel* than of *Chriſt*; and ſeems to verifie that imputation as to a part of Chriſtians, which *Julian* once as falſly as maliouſly affixt upon the whole: that *their Church was an Aſylum and ſanctuary for the moſt flagitious offenders, and protected thoſe guilts to which no other Religion allowed any Expiation.* 'Tis indeed ſo horrid that I cannot think there are many *conſciences* ſo cauteriz'd by this fiery *zeal* as to admit it, yet that ſome have done it, there is too much certainty, and therefore 'tis no improper inſtance in our preſent argument; for if mens *eagerneſs* to ſupport their ſeveral ſides, can tranſport them to ſuch *attempts* as theſe, 'tis abundant Evidence how much Chriſtianity loſes by theſe conteſts of under-factions, which while they pretend to *guard*, do indeed *invade* her under her own Colours.

BUT beſides the faults men commit with this immediate *avow'd aſpect* upon their religion, there are others which ſlily ſhroud themſelves under the *skirt* of its *mantle*: I mean thoſe *Sins* of common life, which though they pretend not to advance the cauſe, yet when acted by a *Zealot* are thought to be overwhelm'd by his heroick *Piety*. Indeed men who make themſelves ſo much work about others *faith*, are ſeldom at leiſure to regulate their own *practice*, and ſo have no way of ſtating their accounts with God, but by balancing the *exceſs* of the one againſt the *defects* of the other: How ſuch reckonings will paſs the grand Audit, 'tis I think not hard to divine; but in the interim, it keeps them very chearful and ſecure, teaches them a Receipt to retain all their *Sins*, and yet loſe none of their *confidence*; ſo that when they have immerſt themſelves in all filthineſs both of Fleſh and Spirit, they can truſt their zeal to refine them from all that Droſs. Nor does it only thus reconcile them to their own vices, but to other mens alſo, whoſe moſt brutiſh ſenſualities they can look on with perfect patience, nay even *Atheiſm* it ſelf can have *fair Quarter*: They are not much diſcompoſed to ſee

men have *no Religion*, 'tis only the having *one different* from their own that awakes their indignation; then like *Saul* when ſeiz'd on by the *evil ſpirit*, they caſt about their Javelins, think no rigor too great on ſuch a provocation; yet even here they have intervals, and the very ſame perſons who are thus at odds upon a *religious*, can unite upon a *vitious* account. Thoſe who mutually denounce *damnation* to each other, can with full accord combine in thoſe *practices* which will aſcertain it to them both, as if they ſo much fear'd to have their *predictions* defeated, that they would be each others *convoy* to the land of darkneſs. Thoſe that will by no means meet at the *Church*, know not when to part at the *Tavern*, and though they will not joyntly partake of the *Cup of the Lord*, are yet very ſociable at the *Cup of Devils*; I mean thoſe exceſſive debauches, which are a moſt acceptable drink-offering to thoſe infernal ſpirits. Have we not ſeen many whoſe diſtant opinions have faſtned upon one another the brand of *Antichriſtianiſm*, who have yet like *Gog* and *Magog* joyn'd againſt the holy City? And thoſe who could never agree on the way of ſetting up *Chriſts Throne*, have yet been very unanimous in pulling down the *Kings*. Thus alas, do we juſtle one another out of the *narrow path* that leads to life, but can hand in hand run our Career in the *broad way* of deſtruction. And doubtleſs this great unevenneſs, theſe ſpiritual feuds, and carnal endearments between the ſame perſons; this *impetuous zeal*, and as *impetuous luſts* in the ſame breaſts could never be, did not men depend ſo confidently on the *one*, as to think it will commute, and ſatisfie for the *other*. But alas, how groundleſs a Preſumption this is, the whole tenour of the Goſpel does abundantly witneſs. In all that grand *Charter* where is there the leaſt clauſe importing ſuch an *immunity*? I am ſure there are multitudes that aſſert the contrary. Indeed the whole frame of the Evangelical covenant is totally againſt it: That requiring an entire uniform Sanctity, and allowing no other *priviledge* to the *ſins* of the moſt knowing Profeſſors, but a *preheminence* in *puniſhment*, the being beaten with many *ſtripes*. And when 'tis conſider'd that the *end* of all Religion is but the drawing us to a *conformity* with God, the impreſſing on us ſome Character of his eternal goodneſs and holineſs, 'twill be as abſurd as impious to believe that our *zeal* to any Religion can abſolve us from that *purity* which is the

the end and design of all. And while this is the way men take to approve their piety, 'tis no marvel to find so *many* Christians, and so *little* Christianity in the World: for that is not to be estimated by the *number* of its professors, but by their *obedience* to its Rules, and he that gives up his *name* to it and not his *heart*, will receive as little *advantage* by it, as he brings *honour* to it, and how little that is in respect of its internal Efficacy, is I presume competently evidenced.

BUT that we may more throughly discern how universally destructive our *wranglings* are to it, in all its *concerns*, let us a little examine whether they do not endamage it even in respect of *outward profession* also. This may seem a strange Query to those who think their *disputes* about Religion are to denominate them the great *confessors* of the Age: yet certainly there is but too much ground not only for the *enquiry*, but to resolve it in the *affirmative*. And if it prove so, 'twill inser but sadly to those who having laid the whole stress of their Hopes upon their zeal to advance their Faith, will be found to have *pull'd down* more than they have *built up*. Now Christianity may in respect of profession decay two ways, either in its *hopes*, or in its *possession*, the one in relation to *Aliens*, the other to *Disciples*. The first by hindring the access of *new* Converts, the second by staggering or alienating the *old*, and both these ways she visibly appears to suffer by our divisions. And first if we consult but our experience, if we trust but our own observations, we cannot but confess that the Gospel has long been at a great stand: That that *Sun* which at its first arising was like *Davids*, *Psal.* 19. surrounded the World in a vigorous efficacious motion, is since become like *Joshuas*, *Josh.* 10: 12. arrested in its course: nay like *Hezekiahs*, gone backward, *Isai.* 38: 8. *Mahumetism* (if not *Paganism*) having long taken up its seat in divers of the most flourishing Apostolick plantations. A sad change, that from the daily and numerous accession of the first times, it should now become a kind of *Prodigie*, a piece of *news*, scarce heard in an Age, that one single *Proselyte* is gain'd to the *Church*; yet that thus it is, is too obvious to be denied. And truly it is not much less apparent that our dissentions have in a great degree contributed to it. For first, as to the *extirpation* of the Eastern Churches, he that shall examine the records of those times, will have cause to say, their

Jangling

Jangling and Diviſions were not only in a *moral* or *divine*, but even in a *proper natural ſence*, the Inſtruments of it. The *Turk* only coming in at thoſe breaches which themſelves had made, nor had their *Candleſtick* probably been removed, had they not firſt abus'd its *light*, to the ſetting themſelves in *Combuſtion*. That the ſame *cauſe* has not yet had the ſame *effect* among us, is owing not to its *unaptneſs* to produce it, but to the admirable *patience* and *mercy* of God, who yet withholds that fatal Judgement, which we do our parts to pull upon our ſelves; our mutual violences againſt one another herein unhappily combining and making one united force againſt us all. But though the *divine goodneſs* hath hitherto ſo countermined our *treachery* to our ſelves, as not to ſuffer us to enjoy that ſtate of darkneſs we have ſo courted, yet certainly our *contentions* are extremely acceſſary to the continuing it upon others, our many *new* and *wandring lights*, however they fail of having that Property of the *Pillar of fire*, *Exod.* 14. of illuminating and conducting the *Iſraelites*, yet too much anſwer its other, in becoming *cloud* and *darkneſs* to the *Ægyptians*; there being ſcarce any thing more apt to intercept the beams of the Sun of righteouſneſs from the Heathen World, every of thoſe *little incloſures* our Factions have made in the Church, becoming a *great partition-wall* to keep others out of it. This may be made evident in ſeveral reſpects. As firſt, in relation to thoſe many *moral obliquities* in which our eager diſputes do (as hath already been ſhewed) betray us, which cannot but give ſo much *ſcandal* to any conſidering man, that we can ſcarce hope any can turn to us as to a better Religion, but will rather think it the way to relinquiſh all; to obliterate thoſe *native impreſſions* of Piety and Honeſty they brought with them into the world, ſo that if we expect any *Proſelytes*, it muſt be only ſuch as would live *worſe* than mere *nature* allows them.

BUT this though as important a conſideration as can well be, I ſhall not here inſiſt on, having in the ſecond Section given ſome inſtances how apt our *Morality* is to defame our *Divinity*, and confirm men in Oppoſition to it. But though this be a *great*, yet 'tis not the *only* means by which our Diſſentions hinder the progreſs of the Goſpel, for they do not only make *Infidels* leſs inclinable to receive it, but *us* to propagate it. Thoſe do ſo buſie and engroſs us, that there is neither

neither leiſure nor heart left for this. Our *activeſt ſpirits* are ſo engaged at home in aſſerting their *private quarrels*, that all ſuch *foreign deſigns* are forgot. For as in *Civil*, ſo in *Eccleſiaſtical* concerns, every one is more Induſtrious to advance his *peculiar* intereſt than that of the *community*, accordingly we find innumerable promulgers of every new Opinion. No *Sect* wants its *Apoſtles* to propagate and diffuſe it; but where are there any that have the like care for the main *Root* of Chriſtian Religion, which they have for theſe little *Twigs* and *Offſets* which they have planted in their own Gardens; how many ages muſt we look back to find a man that has made it his buſineſs to convert *Infidels* to the Faith? 'Tis true indeed there are ſome very magnificent relations of *modern attempts* this way, of great induſtry ſome have us'd to bring the moſt ſavage Nations to the obedience of Chriſt: but if we examine, 'twill be obvious, the main deſign was to ſubject them to themſelves. 'Twas not ſo much their *Heatheniſm* as their *territories* they invaded, and ſuch *Apoſtles* as theſe are ill qualified to make *S. Pauls* profeſſion, 2 *Cor.* 12: 16. *I ſeek not yours but you.* And the ſucceſs of ſuch Eſſays have been anſwerable to the motive; they have won *riches* but not *Souls*. The *Goſpel* in one hand and a *ſword* in the other has made many *ſlaves*, but I fear few *Chriſtians*. Indeed, what encouragement had thoſe poor creatures to receive a Religion from their Oppreſſors? Why ſhould they think that thoſe who tortured and kill'd their *Bodies*, were really concern'd to ſave their *Souls*? or that thoſe who would not permit them to enjoy what was their own, meant to help them to any thing better? And while the *felicities* of another World were recommended to them only by *ſuch*, as had deprived them of all in *this*, we cannot wonder at their *little appetite* to embrace them; or to find the oppreſt *Indians* proteſt againſt that heaven where the *Spaniards* are to be their cohabitants. In ſhort, this is ſure ſuch a method of *Evangelizing*, as too widely differs from that which firſt planted the *Church*, to be likely to advance its *growth*: ſo that notwithſtanding all pretences of this kind, we may reſume our aſſertion, and conclude that our *inteſtine diſcords* (perhaps not thoſe alone) have diverted the *Zeal* of this more Chriſtian undertaking, and left a great part of the World under that invincible Ignorance *S. Paul* mentions, *Rom.* 10: 14. *How ſhall*

ſhall they call on him, in whom they have not believed, and how ſhall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard; and how ſhall they hear without a preacher? and God knows whether we have not herein provided better for their Excuſe than our own.

THERE is yet another way by which our *diviſions* impede their *converſion*, and that is by giving them *prejudice* to that Doctrine about which our ſelves cannot agree. 'Tis an univerſal Maxime that *truth is always conſonant to it ſelf*; and therefore where they ſee ſo little *unity* they have too much *temptation* to doubt of Truth. He that wandring ſhould meet a Company that offer to conduct him to his journeys end, might reaſonably incline to deliver himſelf up to their *guidance*; but if he find them unagreed upon the way, one Diſputing for this, and another for that, and every one proteſting againſt all but his own; he would ſure retract his *confidence*, and think they offer'd him only more variety of miſtakes, reſolve it as ſafe to truſt himſelf to his *own* Errors as *other mens*. And this alas, ſeems to be too exact a parallel of the preſent caſe; we Chriſtians do ſo mutually damn one another, that a poor *Turk* or *Heathen* will think, he rather *multiplies* than *ends* his Danger by aſſociating himſelf with us; for there being ſo many parties, which ſoever he joyns himſelf to, there will be abundant odds againſt him; ſo that if he could be ſecur'd the truth were among us, yet the great difficulty of finding it out, would be a very diſheartening conſideration. Beſides, men love in *tranſactions* of great Importance to have as *many* and as *credible Vouchers* as may be, and upon that ſcore 'twill ſure be but a cold inducement to any to turn *Chriſtian*, to foreſee, that when he has done ſo, he ſhall be *diſown'd* by far the greater part of that number, and that at his entrance into the *Church*, he ſhall be met with almoſt as many *Anathemas*, as when he was an *Infidel*. Nay, I ſcarce know whether I may call it an entrance into the *Church*, or rather into a *Conventicle*, or *particular Congregation*, our Schiſms and Separations having hardly left a poſſibility of *external communion* with the *univerſal Church*, ſince the Communicating with one part of it, does infallibly Excommunicate from another. Thus have we placed our *flaming Sword* (though God knows no *Cherubim*) at the gate of our Paradiſe, and when God calls all men to the *waters of life*, our Contentions

tions have made them like *those of Marah*, so bitter and unpleasant, as deters and averts men from them: Which as it is in the highest degree injurious to them, so is it contumelious to *him*, whose invitations are by this means frustrated; 'tis in some degree the evacuating one of the main *purposes* of Christs coming into the World, which was to *call men out of darkness into his marvellous light*, and as *He* was thus sent by his Father, so also were the *Apostles* solemnly commissionated by him to preach to the Gentile World, who with indefatigable industry and resolute sufferings pursued the *charge*; and sure this is competent evidence, that the design was of the greatest and most weighty importance, and such as can never be out-dated, till there cease to be objects of it, unbelievers to convert: And by that let us measure the guilt of obstructing it, which if we would impartially do, I assure my self the most *passionate Bigot* of any Party must confess, that it infinitely out-weighs all the Piety his doctrine can pretend to, that his *peculiar* Church gains not so much as the *Catholick* loses: And that how confidently soever he hath Canoniz'd his quarrels, they are indeed but the worst sort of Heathens, and serve to keep out the better. Yet besides the mischief they do in relation to those that are *without*, they are extremely pernicious to those that are *within*, and that not only to some *one Sect*, but like an *universal poyson*, that is equally deadly to the most contrary complexions, they operate on the most distant ranks of Professors, *the tender* and the *obdurate*, the *scrupulous* and the *prosane*. And first for the tender tremulous Christian, 'tis easie to discern how much he must be distracted and amaz'd by them; for while he hears each Sect thunder out *Damnation* against each other, he cannot but be startled at the *danger* of adhering to the *wrong*, and though that may a-while excite his diligence to discover the *right*, yet when he comes to that inquisition, he will meet with so many *Polemick intricacies* to entangle him, that after many turns, first to one side, and then to another, he will be apt to think the only *clue* to extricate him out of this *labyrinth* of many Religions, *is to abandon all*. Nor is this *mere speculation* and *Conjecture*, God knows we have had successively through the whole round of Error too many *practick experiments* of it. Several persons there have been, whose Zeal to find out *truth* by an unhappy rule of *False*, directed them to allow of *every*

Error:

Error: While like *sick men*, who desire to die good-cheap, they put themselves into the hands of any *Empirick*, follow each bold pretender, that has the impudence to talk of Truth, till Superstition ends in Prosanation, *Godliness* proves *Atheism*, and by having been of *many Sects*, at last have *no Religion*. And surely this is a most unhappy effect of our discords, thus to be *stumbling-blocks* in our brothers way, and when we remember the woes pronounc'd against those that shall Scandalize any of the little ones, 'twill be strange how men can think to approve their *Christianity*, by the ruine of their Brothers, or secure themselves of *Heaven* by keeping others thence: For though Christ tells his Disciples there should be some that should think it a *service* to God *to kill their Bodies*, yet to phancy the *destroying of souls* so too, is a Deception of which we have neither *record* nor *prediction* in Holy Writ, and is a superfetation of the spirit of delusion, peculiar to those who have placed their own sanctity in these religious wranglings, which serve to destroy it in other men. And as they thus serve on the one side to shipwrack the *faith* of these weak unstable Souls; so do they on the other advance the *impiety* of the daring sinner; for as they are Temptation to the *one*, so are they Pretence and Excuse to the *other* to bid defiance to all Religion. He whose dissolute *affections* have so long been courting his *understanding* to turn Atheist, will sure not lose the advantage of so plausible an argument as our *divisions* afford him; and since his *lusts* engage him in an irreconcileable War against the *practick part* of Piety, he will most gladly embrace this occasion of quarrel against the *Theory* also: So making himself entire, and extinguishing those uneasie regrets and misgivings arising from the repugnancy of his *life* to his *belief*. It were not hard to give a *compendium* of these mens *Logick*, and draw out those *Schemes* of Discourse, by which from our *differences* in Religion they infer the *discarding* of all. But I fear these are already too well known, and where they are not, I should be loth to be any mans Instructor. This is I am sure too palpable, that how *fallacious* soever these Reasonings are, they have been very *operative*, as appears by the number of those *avowed Atheists* among us, who placing themselves *in the seat of the scorner*, give themselves much pleasing Divertisement by *deriding* our eager *scuffles* about that which they think nothing. If any man

man thinks that the *Church* is no loser by the defection of such *Libertines*, I must be allowed to dissent from him: For first, there are examples of the most vicious Persons, that have been reduced, and while they retain their Christian *belief*, that lays such undeniable obligations to good *life*, that whenever they resume their *reason*, they must take up *virtue* also with it; so that there is an equal possibility of their being *good*, that there is of their being *rational*: But when all hope and fear of a future estate is disclaim'd, when those cords are broken which should pull them up from the Dungeon, then, and not before is their state visibly desperate. But besides this possibility of *recovering them*, the danger of *losing others* is to be considered. Bold *Atheism* is like a raging *Pestilence*, which taints the very *Air*, so that those impious *discourses* which are the *effects* of some mens Vices, may be the *cause* of others; and we too often see that those who ascended themselves *by degrees*, do *in an instant* advance their *Proselytes* to the height of Irreligion, as appears by the strange proficiency of some, whose Years allow them not to have arrived to it otherwise than *per Saltum*. And sure this spreading Contagion has been so destructive to the Church, that it were to be wisht, the mere titular Christians had rather remain'd such, than thus to have averted others from being so much.

AND now if all these scandals be worth our regret, if the emboldening and exasperating the *bad*, the corrupting the *innocent*, and the decay of Christian *profession* consequent to both, be *formidable Evils*, we know where to charge the *guilt*. Our *contentions* must be arraign'd as *accessaries* if not *principals* in the case: And then sure it will befit our angry Zealots to consider, whether this be the way of *advancing Gods truth*, *or what account they will give to the Lord of the Vineyard*, who while they pretend to dress and prune the *branches*, do thus debilitate and destroy the *roots*. Nay, indeed in this they are treacherous even to their own pretensions, for all those several religions which they so tenderly cherish, have no *proper root* of their own, but like Excrescencies, spring out of the *main stock* of Christianity, live by its juice and moisture, and consequently, can never hope to survive it. And then certainly there can be nothing more ridiculous, than to express their kindness to the *one*, by ways that are so ruinous to the *other*.

'Tis

'Tis as if a *Paſſenger* in a ſhip ſhould, to fortifie his *private Cabin*, tear up the *planks* and expoſe the whole Veſſel to ſinking: Yet thus prepoſterouſly do many of our *chief Pilots* apply their care. In the mean time, it cannot but be a very *delightful proſpect* to the grand Enemy of Souls, to ſee us thus buſily promote his *intereſt*, lay *ſnares* for our ſelves, and by our own *folly* do that which all his *ſubtilities* could never compaſs. Nor can we think but he will be as *officious* to us as is poſſible, while we are thus employed, will help us to contrive our *Turrets*, whilſt he ſees we pluck out *ſtones* from the *foundation* to build them with; nor ſhall we ever want *new models* of Churches, ſo long as they thus help to deſtroy the *old*; and how aptly they are fitted for that Purpoſe, needs (I ſuppoſe) no farther Demonſtration.

CHAP. XII.

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A Survey of the Miſchiefs ariſing from Diſputes, in reference to Civil Peace.

AND now ſure we cannot but conclude our *Contentions* highly injurious to *Chriſtianity*, that thus aſſault it both in the *Practick* and *Theory*: And indeed how fierce ſoever our quarrels are with one another, the heavieſt blows are ſure to fall on that, which as in its conſtitution is of the moſt Pacifick temper imaginable, ſo it has the common fate of reconcilers to ſuffer from all parties. But *Godlineſs having the promiſe as well of this life as of that which is to come*, it often happens that there is ſuch a conſent between our *ſpiritual* and *ſecular* Concerns, that the Miſchiefs that oppreſs the *one* do reflect on the *other*: And indeed Religion when intire and united, is one of the beſt bonds of *Civil* as well as *Eccleſiaſtical* Peace, (as even thoſe atteſt, who defying all other ends of it, do yet admit it a uſeful State-engine;) from whence 'tis conſequent, that the *diſtractions* and *diviſions* in that muſt have proportionably a contrary influence, and infect *communities* with Diſcord, Tumult and Diſorders. And this is an *effect* with which I think not

not unfit to bring up the *rear* of the foregoing Miſchiefs, it being not ſo purely Secular, as not to ſuit our preſent ſubject; for *outward order* and *unity* can never be ſo innocently diſturb'd, but that *Chriſtianity* muſt be wounded in it alſo: And beſides, it may perhaps obtain more conſideration than the former, as being of a nature wherein the generality of men will think themſelves the moſt concern'd; for though there be many that can look on the ruine both of Chriſtian practice and profeſſion, with *Gallios* indifference, *Acts* 18: 17. and care for none of thoſe things, yet when the ſiege draws cloſer, when they find themſelves begirt in their worldly intereſts, and that the ſame Deluge that overwhelms *Churches*, may bear down *Palaces* alſo, perhaps they may think the matter not ſo contemptible. And firſt, as to the truth of the obſervation, the *World* has too long groaned under the *Experiment* to need farther proof. That *bitterneſs* which firſt tainted the *waters of the Sanctuary*, hath from thence diffus'd it ſelf into our *common ſtreams*, and like the *Ægyptian Plague*, left none uncorrupted: For whether we look upon Families, Neighbourhoods, Kingdoms, any the *leaſt*, or any the *greateſt* Societies, we find the miſerable *Trophees* of our *holy Wars*, in Factions and Confuſions; I would I could not ſay, Rapine and Bloud alſo. For the *firſt* of theſe, the domeſtick Jars caus'd by different Opinions, the *Inſtances* are numerous, or rather innumerable, which our *own age* and *nation* afford us. How many Servants have on this ſcore been at defiance with their Maſters? Children with their Parents? Nay, Wives with their Husbands? Such an unhappy force is there in *miſtaken zeal*, that it diſſolves the *cloſeſt bounds*, violates all *obligations* natural or civil, while under pretence of ſervice to God, like the *Phariſees* Corban, it evacuates all duty to man; and this has made ſuch ruptures and diviſions in Families, that that delightful proſpect the *Pſalmiſt* ſo much commends, that of *Brethrens dwelling together in unity*, *Pſal.* 133. is ſcarce any where to be met with; but inſtead of that, ſuch rancour and bitterneſs, treachery and malice, as if men either miſtook Chriſts *prediction*, *Luke* 12: 52. for a *precept*, or at leaſt were willing to advance his *Prophetick* Office upon the ruine of his *Kingly*, and to verifie his *preſage* by breaking his *command*. And as the Oeconomical order and peace is thus diſturb'd, ſo if he that miſſes quiet *at home* ſhould ſeek for it *abroad*, he will

ſoon

soon find himself disappointed, and discern that as the *societies* grow greater, so do the *disorders* also, and that private strifes do as much combine to make *parties* and *factions*, as families do to make *Cities* and *Corporations*. By this means that mutual communication, by which the Members of civil bodies should not only benefit one another, but secure the whole, is interrupted, and men live not as *neighbours*, but *spies*, always upon designs of Entrapping and Ensnaring; for while they look on one another as *enemies to God*, they think that rescinds all obligations of *friendship among themselves*, and when Religion bears the *Standard*, the *War* will be concluded necessary and honourable. But though it be so in *imagination only*, 'tis sure there are some, who make it *really profitable*; for as in most *Camps*, the greater Number are attracted rather by hope of *booty* than concern for the *cause*; so here, many men *list* themselves under one Party, that they may have pretence to *prey* upon the rest. And to that End several very commodious *Axioms* have been taken up. As that *No faith is to be kept with Hereticks*; that *Dominion is founded in Grace*, &c. by such measures as these the goods of the *Aegyptians* become lawful prizes to any, that please to call themselves *Israelites*; and indeed *Jews* they may be call'd in that notion we vulgarly use it of *unjust* and *cruel extortioner*: But sure not such *Israelites* as Christ defines *Nathanael*, *Joh.* 1:47. *without guile*: For having thus consecrated their frauds, and found an expedient of serving *God* and *Mammon* together, there is no piece of *deceit* either too big, or too little for them; no transaction is so important, which can oblige their *fidelity*; none so trivial as to discourage their *rapine*: Opportunity is the only measure and rule of their attempts, by this means no *Obligation* of Contract, no *Laws* of Commerce can escape unviolated; every thing is lawful that may weaken the wicked, and that *Zeal* which makes men *Saints* in the Church or Conventicle, can make them *Thieves* in the Shop or Market. Thus is Piety made an Engine of rapine, and by these *religious riots*, all *boundaries* wherewith Laws or Equity have fenc'd mens distinct *properties*, are thrown down: And sure this is a most carnal consequent of our spiritual debates, and bids fair towards the reducing us to that state of common Hostility, which some have phancied to be the *Original condition* of mankind:

kind: For it renders commerce so dangerous, that men may within a while think it safest to trust their own *strengths*, than to the shelter of those *Laws* and *Civil compacts*, which they see so avowedly evacuated. And upon this account, though the Injury be immediately done to *private* persons, it becomes a *publick* mischief: yet alas, these are but the more moderate *effects* of our Dissentions; they afford more expedite and compendious ways of publick ruine; the *defrauding* or *undermining* of a few Neighbours, are *petty prizes* for those that think they have the sole right to the Creature, and are those *Meek* who are to *inherit the Earth*, and every such acquest only serves to flesh them for a farther chase. The *spoils* of a broken Kingdom will afford something worth the *scrambling* for: And nothing more fit to *break it* than a pretence of Religion, which like the *stone* that smote *Nebuchadnezzars* Image, has shivered the most goodly Monarchies. And accordingly, we see no *Engine* is more constantly us'd by men of Seditious spirits, to disturb and subvert Governments: Indeed there can be nothing so advantageously fitted for the purpose. For should such persons unmask their *design*, and shew it in its *native uglinesse*, should they avow the shaking of a *Kingdom* merely to establish themselves in a condition of *wealth* and *grandeur*, the new moulding of a Government only that they might shape their own shares in it, 'twere impossible they should find any abettors; for though the *multitude* are always in preparation for *change*, yet 'tis not on Intuition of benefit to some *private persons*, but of somewhat wherein *themselves* may partake: Nor is even the madness of the people mad enough, to expose all their *own interest*, and most important concerns only to promote *those of others*. It has therefore always been both the rule and practice for such designers to suborn the *publick interest* to countenance and cover their *private*; to cry up *Diana* to secure their own *gain*, and to make the seduced *Populacy* like the *Jack cal* to the *Lion*, hunt the prey which themselves mean to devour. And of all those artificers by which such *Incendiaries* have set Kingdoms in a *flame*, none has been more universally successful than the *pretext* of Religion, which is thought so *creditable a cause* to engage in, as can convert the *infamous titles* of Rebel and Traitor into those of Patriot and Saint, and consequently, take off all

diſcouragement ariſing from the diſreputation of ſuch an enterprize: And no leſs potent is it in ſolving the ſcruples of its unlawfulneſs; for by a dexterous anticipation, it makes Conſcience a *party*, that it may exclude it from being *judge*, and by that only ſallacy of ſuppoſing *Religion* to be *a juſt ground of quarrel*, make way for all the wild conſequences deducible from that *falſe principle*: And indeed where that is throughly faſtned, the *miſchiefs* are not only *great* but *incurable*, and yet the more ſo by how much the perſon is more zealous. For alas, what will it avail to tell ſuch a man, 'tis a ſin to *fight againſt his King*: when he will tell you 'tis a greater not to *fight for his God*: That he contracts a *heinous guilt* in violating the *peace* of the Church, when he with as great confidence believes, he *merits* in propagating its *truth*. That he is accountable for the *bloud* of his Brethren; when he thinks he has like the *Levites*, *Exod.* 32. conſecrated himſelf in it, and offer'd it an acceptable *ſacrifice* to God. Thus unhappily are theſe men fortified in their *ſin*, by preſuming it their *Vertue*, and while the *furious zeal* of ſuch is made ſubſervient to the *wicked craft* of others, 'tis a moſt *apt inſtrument* of publick Miſchief, there being no attempt ſo deſperate, which ſuch may not be put upon, who are methinks us'd, as *Hannibal* is ſaid to have done thoſe Oxen, whoſe *horns* he firſt fired, and then ſent them to diſturb the *Roman* camp: Theſe *men* as thoſe *beaſts* are found very uſeful for the moleſting of others; but commonly all they acquire to themſelves, is the *ſmart* of their own *flames*. Few of thoſe who thus in the ſimplicity of their heart follow an *Abſalom* or a *Sheba*, that do not either miſcarry together with the *deſign*, or elſe live to diſcern how much their *credulity* was abuſed; and that both *religion* (however pretended) and *thoſe* that fought for it, were only made *properties* to promote the *luſts of thoſe* who deſpiſed both. But 'tis unneceſſary to inſiſt farther on the *effects* of ſuch religious Fury, of which *we of this Nation* have had ſo many and ſo *coſtly evidences*, as far tranſcend the moſt *tragical deſcriptions*. God grant we may never have other than our *paſt experiences* to meaſure them by: But certainly there is little reaſon to be ſecure, ſo long as the *root* of them, our *ſpeculative differences* daily encreaſe; for unleſs we could ſuppoſe an Age of ſuch innocence, that there ſhould be none who would *take* any undue Advantages, 'tis ſure there will be enough *given*:

And

And indeed when we reflect upon our past Distractions, and consider how trivial the *matter* of most of those debates was, whose *manner* has been so cruelly solemn; how our sleightest *problems* have been writ in *blood*, that many Thousands have been made *naked* to keep the *Surplice off* a few mens backs, and we have pulled down our *Churches* in displeasure at the *windows*; when I say these and a Thousand the like are considered, we must conclude that there can never *want* Occasion to them that (in the *Apostles* Phrase) *desire* Occasion: The *lightest distempers* in the Church being *contagious*, and most apt (when fomented by ambitious designers) to beget an *universal Plague* in the Common-wealth. And now who can without horror consider these miserably perverted *effects* of Christian Religion, that *that* which was design'd the most *inviolable bond of unity*, should like those curles of entangled Snakes with which *Erinnys* is said to have infuriated *Athemas* and *Ino*, become the *fatal incendiary of the mortallest hatred.* That *that Oeconomy* which was meant to *regulate*, should be the Instrument of *confounding* and *embroiling* the World; and a *Gospel of Peace* should thus be made the *Incentive to war*, and create fiercer quarrels than those it was to have compos'd. To *turn the Grace of God into wantonness*, is justly branded as a *great* Crime, but sure to turn it *into malice* is yet a *greater.* And though every sin offers violence to our Religion, yet *this* is of all others the most *barbarous*, thus to make it Assassinate it self, become a kind of *Felo de se*, and contribute to its own ruine. And that this is the case, is I presume sufficiently evident in all the *forgoing instances*, which as they are most obviously the *effect* of our eager Disputes, so are they no less visibly *destructive* to Christianity in all its interests, leave it neither *root* nor *branch*, neither *inward* Vigor, nor *outward* Lustre; so at once rendring it both infertile and unamiable. 'Twas a piece of hostile Severity against *Moab*, to *fill the Land with stones, thereby to render it barren*, 2 *King.* 3: 25. The slingers went about, and smote it: but what *that* suffered from *professt Enemies*, the *Church* daily sustains from those that call themselves her best *friends*. Our *Benjamites* are so in love with their skill of slinging to a hairs breadth, their nice Criticisms, Distinctions, and Subtilties, have cast abroad so many *stones of contention*, that the Church is become perfect *quarry*, utterly *steril* and *unfruitful*,

as to all thoſe good works for the production whereof ſhe was ſo peculiarly ſenced and cultivated by God; nay, 'twere well if *barrenneſs* were the worſt, and that ſhe had not on the other ſide acquir'd an unhappy *degenerous fertility*: But what a numerous and accurſed Iſſue ſpring from this unpeaceable temper, the fore-going conſiderations do too ſadly demonſtrate; and I doubt not every attentive Obſerver will be able to add *more* (though not *truer*) Inſtances; and beſides to diſcern that this *ſpurious brood* like that of *Hagar* is grown ſo wantonly inſolent as to deſpiſe the *right heir* of the Promiſe. The true *Goſpel-Graces* of Meekneſs, Peaceableneſs and univerſal Charity are accounted *Earthly Phlegmatick qualities*, we diſclaim that *Holy Ghoſt* which deſcends in the appearance of the *Dove*; nay, or in *fire* either, unleſs it be like that of *Elijah*, to conſume all that diſguſt us; nor do we meaſure our *Religion* ſo much, by the oppoſition it makes to our *luſts*, as to thoſe whom we firſt make, and then call our *enemies*. Thus miſerably have we chang'd the Scene, and by *calling evil good, and good evil*, have accumulated injuries upon our oppreſſed Chriſtianity, not only robb'd it of its *rule*, but of its *reputation* alſo. And do we daily thus ſee *Iſhmael* mocking *Iſaac*, and ſhall we not think it time to caſt out the Bondwoman and her Son? Shall we for ever cheriſh this generation of *Vipers* to tear out the *bowels* of our common Mother? I pray God the Queſtion have not as much of *preſage* as *expoſtulation*. For if we conſider the preſent ſtate of things, how our *contention* plead not only *right* but *preſcription*, there ſeems not much hope of diſpoſſeſſing them, and yet leſs, when 'tis remembred, how they have entwiſted themſelves, not only with the *paſſions*, but *intereſts* of man; two ſuch *potent Abettors* as will buoy up the moſt *forlorn cauſe*. The truth is, there are many *ſubterraneous ſprings* which feed *this Ocean*, and though Religion and piety be on all hands demurely pretended, yet as we have ſeen the *effects* of our debates very *diſconſonant* to ſuch a Profeſſion; ſo if we examine the *originals* and *cauſes*, we ſhall find them for the moſt part as *widely diſtant*. It may not be amiſs to take a ſhort view of ſome of them; for though I cannot hope the *diſcovery* of the Cauſes will contribute to the *general cure*, yet perhaps it may prove *Antidote* to ſome particular perſons, who will be the leſs

apt

apt to admire the verdure of the *leaves* (the flouriſhing appearances of *zeal* and *piety*) when they find both *fruit* and *root* of ſo poiſonous a quality.

CHAP. XIII.

A Survey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; and firſt, Pride.

AND in this inqueſt we find Pride already arraigned to our hands, by the wiſeſt of Men, *Prov.* 13: 10. *Only by pride cometh contention.* It is indeed a moſt prolifick vice, and there are few *ſins* to which it is not either a *parent* or *nurſe*: but there is ſcarce any which does more betray its immediate deſcent from it than this of *ſtriſe* and *debate*, which has ſo many of the *lineaments* and *features* of the deform'd Mother, as ſufficiently atteſt its *extraction*. And as this is true of *all* ſtrifes in general, ſo particularly of *thoſe* whereof we now treat: for Pride being it ſelf an internal ſin, it has ſuch a neighbourhood with all the notions and ſpeculations of the mind, that it eaſily makes impreſſions on them: Nor are we to wonder that the Sacredneſs of divine things is not *Amulet* enough againſt its *Charms*, when we remember that the *firſt act* of Pride that ever was committed, was levelled even *at God* himſelf; and as it took up its firſt ſeat in a ſpiritual ſubſtance, ſo has it ever ſince, never acted more *naturally*, and therefore more *vigorouſly*, than about ſpiritual matters. Of this the Church in all ages has had many coſtly Experiments; for if we trace the Catalogues of Hereſies from *Simon Magus* his days down to our own, we ſhall find Pride a *principal Actor* in every *Scene*, though perhaps in *various dreſſes*. For though Pride be always in the general an affectation of ſome tranſcendency, yet it differs as to the particular object, according to ſeveral eſtimates men make of excellencies. So that the *propugners* of new Opinions, though they have this *common aim*, that they ſeek their *own exaltation*, yet do not always do it in the *ſame inſtances*. For Example, *ſome* have coveted the repute of *profound Inquiſitors*, and this

Vanity has prompted them to dive so deep into the *bowels* of every the *plainest Doctrine*, till at last they have twisted and entangled them into the most *perplexing difficulties*. These *Navigators* think they have never sail'd successfully, till they have found out a *Terra Incognita*, though God knows they bring nothing from thence for the benefit of the habitable World; nor make it their business to *resolve* Doubts, but *start* them. *Another sort* of men there are of so fastidious and petulant wits, that they disdain an *opinion* of which themselves are not the *Authors*; they love not to have their understandings prescrib'd to, by the preconceptions of others, how divinely soever inspir'd, and will rather have a Religion of their *own making* than of *his* whom they pretend to worship. And this, 'tis to be doubted, is the bottom of the great *veneration* some have paid to *Reason*, which they have set up in the *Throne*, not only in defiance of *blind implicit assent*, but even of *divine revelation*. But in the mean time 'tis to be observ'd that 'tis not reason *in general*, the common excellency of our nature that is thus advanc'd, but every mans own *private* and *individual*; which upon a just scanning will often be found the most distant thing from what it is call'd: *Passion* and *Phancy*, by that omnipotent advantage of being a mans own, often passing for *deep discourse* and *ratiocination*: and what a fruitful harvest of Tares such seed is apt to produce, our *reason* would inform us if our *experience* did not. To these we may add *another rank* of men, who vehemently thirsting after a *name* in the World, hope to acquire that by being the *disseminators* of *novel doctrines*; they think while they go on in the *beaten track*, they shall be obscur'd in the *Throng*; the only way to make themselves conspicuous is to be singular: Thus fondly chusing to be eminent, though by the infamous Characters of *Heretick* or *Schismatick*, and (like him that fired *Dianas* Temple to secure himself from oblivion) build themselves *Monuments* of the *Churches ruine*; and sure this *Theudas* his ambition of being some body, has helpt to raise more *opinions* than he did *men*. Yet commonly it answers it even in that circumstance also; for when by *separating themselves* from the *unity of the faith*, they have rendred themselves remarkable, their next aim is to have *others joyn* to them; and so they may have the honour of being *leaders*, care not though it be into the ditch. To be

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call'd of men *Rabbi, Rabbi,* is enchanting Muſick to any *Phariſee*, and ſerves like the Timbrels in *Tophet* to drown the cries not of their *Children*, but *Mothers* ſcorching in the flames of their contention. Indeed ſo impetuous and uncontroulable is this kind of *vanity*, that like a mighty torrent, it bears down all before it, overwhelms not only the oppoſite *virtues*, but even all *vices* that are not of its own confederacy. Men can in this caſe lay ſevere reſtraints upon their moſt *intimate ſenſualities*, when they ſuſpect them *treacherous* to this grand Deſign. The *Wolf* ſhall be muzled and made to behave himſelf with the meekneſs beſeeming the *Sheeps* cloathing. The *Swine* ſhall be waſht and by an unnatural violence with-held from the *mire*: All their rapacious and beſtial *appetites* controul'd and made tame, that they worry not their *reputation*. And all this for a little naked *popularity*, for whoſe dear purchaſe, very many have thought fit to diveſt themſelves, both of lawful and unlawful *enjoyments*; and have thought the tumultuous *applauſe* of a few factious ſpirits worth all that *ſelf-denial*. But all Pride is not ſo perfectly *Camelion* as to ſubſiſt upon this *mere air*, there is another kind of it that propoſes to it ſelf ſomething beyond this: ſuch is the affectation of rule and dominion, which though in reſpect of any real good to the ruler, is as very a *Chimæra* as the former; yet commonly they that are under ſuch a *Juriſdiction*, find to their coſt 'tis more than *Imaginative*. And God knows this *aſpiring humour* has been no leſs fatally active in *Eccleſiaſtick* than in *Civil* affairs; nor has the Church ever been in more danger of *Anarchy* than by *thoſe* who moſt impatiently coveted a ſhare in its Government; for where this ſpirit of Ambition is the Impellent, it does like the *Demoniack* in the Goſpel, burſt aſunder all *fetters* and *chains*, violates the unity both of doctrine and diſcipline, nor is any attempt too bold for men thus animated: They who long to be in authority think the *door* opens not quick enough for their entry, and impatient of ſo tedious an expectation, chuſe rather to make breaches in the *walls* (nay ſometimes to undermine the *foundation*) than to want an *acceſs* to their Deſires. Neither is there any thing ſo ſacred, which upon this occaſion they cannot proſtitute; when *Diotrephes*. 3 *John* 9. ſeeks preheminence, the Dictates even of an *Apoſtle* ſhall be rejected; and even the Divinity of *Chriſt*, *God bleſſed*

for ever, be trampled on, when *Arius* wants a footstool to climb up to his affected greatness. In a word, if we Examine the occurrencies of all ages, we shall find that either the Eagerness of *acquiring*, or the Revenge of *missing dignities*, have been the great *instigators* of Ecclesiastick Feuds; and sure our *Modern* stories, are not likely to fall short of the *Ancient*, in examples of this kind. And as Pride makes *some* thus passionately desirous of rule, so it makes *others* as impatient of being ruled, and even those who cannot hope to arrive to *give* Laws, will not endure to be *under* those already established. That *this* is indeed the Christian *liberty* for which many in our days have so unchristianly contended, is too apparent, the *fundamental quarrel* has been against *subjection*: Yet to countenance and abet that, whole armies of frivolous cavils have been rais'd, and the *Church* attacqued in every its remotest concern; and though there be nothing farther from that unity of mind, to which the simile was first affixt, yet in a perverse sence it imitates the *Ointment* of *Aaron* in *descending from the head to the skirts of the cloathing*: not only the *supreme* and *more eminent parts*, but the most *slight extrinsick* and *inferior relatives* to Religion being aspersi and depraved; and the most *innocent* Circumstances of Civil or Natural actions made *criminal*, when applied to Divine things. A strange *ineffective power*, which these men have conveyed into Gods service, that it must thus pollute every thing that approaches it. That the *place* where his Honour dwells, must become a *Pesthouse*, and diffuse *contagion* to all in it: (I wish by the way their *Sacriledge* had not been too valiant in despising the Danger of those *infected utensils*, which may perhaps sadly verifie the reproach, and prove *treacherous prizes*.) And when mens *zeal* operates thus unkindly, when the pretence of *internal sanctity* devours all *outward decency*, and *God* is to be honoured and exalted by those ways, whereby *man* would think themselves affronted, and vilified; we have too great reason to think such a zeal as little according to *godliness* as *knowledge*, and that it is not so much the *tenderness* of their Consciences, no nor generally the *weakness* of their Brains, but the *Iron sinew* in their Necks, which makes them at once so scrupulous, and so clamorous; for though the *former* might be suppos'd owing to Error, the

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later can surely proceed from nothing but Pride. Several other instances might be given to shew how that pernicious temper has contributed to the rise and first being of our divisions; and having thus given them birth, it does not like the *Ostrich* abandon its brood, but has as great an influence in the *cherishing* and *maintaining*, as it had in *creating* them. Of this there need no other proof than the mere *nature* of Pride, which as it averts nothing more than *self-condemnation*; so upon pain of that appearance, 'tis irreversibly engag'd in the pursuit of its first undertakings, any *desisting* being interpretatively a *confession* either of an Error or a Defeat, both which are insupportable to an assuming temper: So that besides the *original incentives* fore-mentioned, it has this of *disdain* superadded to actuate its motions. And accordingly we find they are at this rebound the more violent, not only the *success*, but the *credit* of the first enterprize depending upon a vigorous prosecution: So that *Catiline's* Maxim of *Villany* seems to have been adopted into some mens *divinity*, and they think past Crimes are only to be secur'd by more and greater. Nor is it only *hope* to atchieve their *design*, or hide their *shame* which thus animates them, *despair* will do it to a yet higher degree. Our Concupiscible and Irascible appetites dwell not so remote, but they are ready reserves to one another, and what was *desire* in the pursuit, becomes *anger* and *revenge* in the disappointment; and sure we need not be told the wild effects of those passions. How many men have in a *furious despair* overacted even their own *projects*, and have made it a malicious consolation in their ruine, to get it attended with that of the publick? As *Herod*, who to secure a *lamentation* at his death, commanded a *Massacre* should accompany it, or (to give a more Ecclesiastical instance) like *Aerius*, who sought the abolishing of that order in the Church, whereof himself could not partake. I wish no mans *Conscience* in our days were qualified to suggest a fresher example. But whilst 'tis so many ways the *interest* of Pride to abet our *contentions*, we cannot think it so sluggish or unindustrious an *agent*, as not to find out *expedients* for its purpose. I shall not attempt to give a particular of its *instruments*, when I have said that *Schism* is one of them, I need not add more, since that alone serves both to *complete* and *perpetuate* the Mischief of all our speculative dissentions. How close a Band of

concord the *communicating in holy duties* is, we may learn by *Jeroboam*, who seems so well to have understood its unitive efficacy, that he durst not trust the newly divided *Tribes* in a joynt resort to the Temple; and therefore left the *rupture* he had made in the State should close again, he thinks it necessary to make *another* in the Church, and secure his defection from his *Prince*, by that from his *God*. But we need not borrow a *testimony* from that his impious *Policy*, we have a more *Authentick attestation* from the holy *Psalmist*, who when he would describe the *greatest entireness*, Exemplifies it by the *walking to the house of God as friends*, *Psalm* 55: 14. And the *Apostle* goes yet higher, and from our common *participation* of the Eucharist, infers not only our *union*, but our *incorporation*. *We being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread*, 1 *Corint.* 10: 17. And then sure we may on the contrary conclude, that our *separation* must have the quite distant effects; alienate our *affections*, and by that means still more estrange our *Judgements*. For besides that 'tis natural to men to think they can never run far enough from that they begin to loath, they are in their own defence to amplifie the *differences*, that they may acquit themselves from the *scandal* of a causeless separation; and this God knows is the usual Method among us, when we have broken *communion*, our only study is not how to *repair*, but *justifie it*. The Adversaries *Tenets* are rigorously scanned, new *Charges* exhibited, and the *Schism* defended upon those later discoveries, which were no motives to the making it. And then sure no man can doubt but this is a *proper way*, both to *multiply and Eternize disputes*; and 'tis abundantly manifest, that vanity and elation of mind is the cause that Men thus prefer a *mistaken reputation*, before their own *innocence*, or the Churches *peace*. Indeed if we throughly consider it, we shall find *Pride* is one of the fatallest instruments of Excision, the *two-edg'd sword* by which adverse parties do mutually cut themselves from one another. The very *elements* and *constitutive parts* of a Schismatick, being the *Esteem of himself*, and the *Contempt of others*. *I am not as this Publican*, was, we know, the voice of the proud *Pharisee*, whose very name signifies *separation*, and our modern *Separatists* do but Echo the same note, when they pronounce all those *Heretical* or *Carnal* from whom they have with-

withdrawn. Or perhaps they derive from a yet more ancient president, those of whom the Prophet *Esai* speaks, *Esai* 65: 5. which say, *Stand by thy self, come not near me, for I am holier than thou*; an Insolent kind of language, which the *Cathari* in the *primitive times* did not more exactly transcribe, than many *Sects* of differing denominations have done in *ours*. But 'tis to be remembred, that while the *Pharisee* lookt so fastidiously on the poor *Publican*, he renounc'd communion in prayers much more acceptable than his own; and those *refined Zealots*, who fear'd *contagion* from the approach of their more innocent Brethren, could boldly venture on the *pollutions* of the most detestable Idolatries: And God knows the note has too ready an application in both instances. In the mean time 'tis a sad contemplation that so much of that *Zeal* which makes such a glistering in the World, shall, when brought to the Touch, be found *adulterate*; that the transcendent *purity* men boast of, should prove but a more sublimated *wickedness*, and their *pretence* to spirituality be verified only in *spiritual pride*. Alas, is not the whole *circuit* of Secular things wide enough to contain this *swelling humour*? Are there not *Pomps* and *Vanities* of the World enough to entertain this one *Lust*, but must this *Moabite* be brought into the *Sanctuary*? Can we not be *elevated* enough we *trample upon* all that is holy, and make *Religion* Factor for our *Ambition*? We find some very confidently point out *Antichrist* upon the strength of this one predicted circumstance, that he was to *sit in the Temple of God*. But what need we travel beyond the *Alps* to find out that, which *every where* presents it self? Our Pride does too unhappily answer the description; and though there is no instance wherein it can cease to be *Antichristian*, yet surely it is more eminently so, when it thus usurps *Gods seat*, and rules in sacred things. Would God the *pains* and *animosity* which has been spent in discovering and reviling *other* Antichrists, had been diverted to the pulling down of *this*, the labour would have been more effectual even to the immediate end of the Designers; for were this Pride *eradicated*, the Foundation of all Spiritual usurpations were *undermin'd*. But alas, those who exclaim the most loudly against all *foraign Tyranny* on their Consciences, do obsequiously bow to this *intestine Usurper*, make an entire dedition of themselves, and submit to the severest and

ignobleſt *vaſſallage*. They have inveſted it with ſo abſolute and ſoveraign a Power, that (as *Samuel* warns the *Iſraelites* of their King, 1 *Sam.* 8.) they are not to call any thing their own, when it is uſeful to its ſervice: All their powers, all their intereſts are devoted to it, and that not only to adorn its *pomp*, but to fight its *battels*. Men quarrel and contend till not only *themſelves*, but even *Chriſtianity* it ſelf expire in the conteſt. But if it be indeed certain that every *War* is ſo far unjuſtifiable, as are the *cauſes* of it, 'twill ſurely be a competent prejudice againſt our contentions, that our Pride is ſo much concern'd in them, which is ſo unchriſtian a *motive*, as all the *holy-water* wherewith men have ſprinkled it, can never baptize into a *cleanneſs*; all the *borrowed dreſſes* of Zeal and Sanctity, however they may *diſguiſe*, can never *legitimate* it. Thoſe arts of concealment may indeed add a *new guilt*, that of *Hypocriſie*, but can never expiate, no nor extenuate the *old*: And how *Saint-like a form* ſoever our *Vain glory* puts on, it does but the more own its derivation from *him*, who can *transform himſelf into an Angel of light*, whoſe aſpirings have firſt ſubverted *himſelf*, and now go on to propagate both his Crime and Ruine to *us*; nor has he ever manag'd that *deſign* with more Art or Succeſs, than by thus making our Pride a *partition-wall* to divide us from *one another*, and conſequently from *God* too; who being, as our Church ſtyles him, the *author of Peace* and *lover of Concord*, can never joyn himſelf with the *diſturbers of both*, but muſt neceſſarily be diſobliged by our Diſſentions and Schiſms.

CHAP. XIV.

A Survey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; Secondly, Curioſity.

IF now we proceed farther in our enquiry we ſhall find, that another grand *incendiary* of our Diſputes is *Curioſity*: A vice which though in ſome reſpects it may be reckoned a *ſpecies* of the *former*, that of Pride, yet in others it admits a *diſtinct conſideration*. This is that baneful *weed* which the Devil made

made a shift to steal even into *Paradise*, and which has ever since affected the *richest soils*, the most pregnant and polite Wits; nor did it only eject *man* from thence, but it has improved the *original curse*, and multiplied those *briars* and *thorns* among which he was cast, yea, transplanted them from the *Earth*, where they could only raze the skin, into the *Brain*, where they pierce and torture the intellectual and immortal Part of Man. Nay, farther, even that *sweat of his brows*, which was to extirpate them from the *ground*, serves but to water and cherish them in his mind; his very *industry* being in this case the extremest *ill husbandry*, and the more *pains* he takes, the farther he removes himself from all *real advantages* of his toil.

THERE are some parts of *Knowledge* which God has thought fit to seclude from us, to fence them not only as he did the interdicted *Tree*, by Precept and Commination, but with Difficulties and Impossibilities; made it not only our *sin* and danger, but our *Folly* and madness to attempt them. Of this kind are the Mysterious parts of our *Religion*, which he shews us as it were a far off to exercise our *faith* and *reverence*, but stoops them not to our *sense* and *disquisition*. These he has placed like the *Sun*, where they may influence, not annoy; warm, not scorch us. And would we still permit them to remain at that safe and wholsome *distance*, we should find none but *benigne effects*; but so importunate are the instigations of Curiosity, that no *bounds* will keep us from the *Mount*: We will needs break through into the *thick darkness*, how dreadful soever the *thunders* and *lightnings* are in the way. Like bold *Phaetons* we despise all *benefits* wherewith the Father of Light and us can court us, unless we may guide his *Chariot*; and we moralize the *Fable* as well in the tragicalness of the *event*, as the insolence of the *undertaking*; this unhappy Curiosity having not only ruin'd many of the *inquisitors*, but set the whole *World* also in a *conflagration*. Nor is this temerity more *fatal* in its Success, than *impious* in its Foundation: For besides that it is a direct *invasion* of Gods peculiar, and *violation* of his Command, it does evidently imply a *distrust*, either of his Wisdom or his Goodness; supposes him either so *ignorant* of the strength of those faculties himself has made, that he has assigned them unproportionable objects, and so they must have new work cut out for them by our selves; or

else presumes his *Eye evil* towards his own Creatures; that as the *Devil* once suggested to our *first Parents*, he fears the rivalry of poor mortals, and by an envious detention of some parts of felicity, like one that had been Bountiful only upon *surprize* and *incogitancy*, illiberally retracts and contradicts his *original design* of making Man completely happy. Nay, indeed this represents him unkind, not only to *us his created Images*, but even to that Eternal and express image of his Person, *the Son of his bosom*, who may well be thought to have been, as despised in *his Eyes*, as he was once in *ours*, *Esay* 53: 3. if he have so cheaply expos'd him for their sakes, to whom he denies any of those *intellectual advantages*, which difference *them* from *Beasts*. Thus wickedly curious are we, that rather than converse with *vulgar ordinary things*, we create *prodigies*, put *new forms* upon him that is *unchangeable*, rob *divinity* of its most inseparable *attribute*, and not only *dis-obey* God, but *reproach* him. And then 'tis no wonder, if that which affords so little *glory* to God, hath no more *good will* for Men, and that which thus wars with *Heaven*, leave little peace on *Earth*. Indeed if we will be building our *Babels*, and thus assault *Omnipotence*, 'tis but just we should have our *language confounded*, and that that *knowledge* for which we boldly attempt to rifle Gods cabinet, should like the *Coal* from the Altar, serve only to embroil and consume the *sacrilegious invaders*. Yet besides what is owing to divine vengeance in the case; the thing has in it self a proper, natural efficiency toward it; for when so many men are engag'd in a *blind search*, 'tis not imaginable they should all *stumble* upon the same Notions, and supposing them to fall upon *variety*, 'tis impossible but mens fond overweening of their own conceits and petulant disdains of others, will improve that *variety* into Opposition, and that *opposition* into set and Solemn Feuds. And God knows the Church is too effectively acquainted with this *fatal gradation*, and can experimentally attest the *unhappy propriety* of this sort of Curiosity towards the engendring of *discord* and *confusion*.

BUT besides this *higher* rank of things which God hath set so much *above* us, there are others of an *inferior* sort, as much *below* us, which are concealed from us, not for their *sublimity*, but their *usefulness*; for as God on the one hand remembers that we are but *flesh*, unable to bear the nearer approaches

proaches of *divinity*, and so talks with us as once with *Moses* through a cloud: So on the other he forgets not that *he breathed into us the breath of life*, a vital active spirit, whose motions he expects should own the dignity of its *original*, and as it was it self an *emanation* of the Essential Goodness, should aim at only *real* and *solid good*, and not evaporate and exhaust its powers in *mean* and *impertinent pursuits*. And upon this score also, he has found it necessary to hide many things from us, not that they would *dazle*, but *misemploy* our Eye; not *swallow* up our Understanding, but *divert* our Attention, from what is more important: Of this sort are those many thin *aerial speculations*, the certain knowledge whereof would bring us no real advantage, make us at all the wiser to Salvation; yet such a value does our *inquisitive Nature* set upon every thing for its being *hid*, that as if our Life were bound up with these Secrets, and all our Felicity dwelt in the Shade of these recesses, we pursue this search with indefatigable *industry*, ransack all corners with as great *diligence* as the *Woman* for her lost piece of Silver, *Luke* 15: 8. And as if this were indeed the *treasure* hid in the field, sell *all* that we have, lay out our whole *selves* upon the *purchase*. Indeed he that shall consider what solemn Disquisitions there are upon the slightest, and inconsiderableſt Subjects, with what Advertence and concern Questions of this kind are bandied in the world, must wonder how men can at once be so *serious* and so *trifling*; or that those who can say *so much* should not once ask themselves to what purpose they say *anything*. Yet what multitudes of men are there engag'd in such cases as this? When alas, the quarry is not worth half the toil, could it be gotten: but what *Solomon* says of the *sluggard*, *Prov.* 12: 27. that *he roasteth not that which he took in hunting*, is true of the contrary temper, these *over-busie spirits* whose labour is their only reward, they hunt a *shadow*, and chase the *wind*; and when they strain to their utmost speed, there is still the wonted Distance between *them* and their *aims*; all their eager pursuits bring them no acquest; but after they have traverst so much *ground*, traced all the *mazes* that learned Curiosity could contrive to perplex men, and studied to the weariness of the *flesh*, if not to the quenching of the *Spirit* too, they are still in the same *ignorance* from whence they set out, and 'twere well if they were also in the same

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doubtfulneſs: But the unhappineſs of it is, they acquire a *confidence* without any *true ground* of it; and get ſuch a Knowledge as may *puff up*, but not *edifie*. This was eminently exemplified in the *Gnoſticks* of old, whoſe vain *Chimæras*, and *fooliſh queſtions*, as the *Apoſtle* calls them, *Tit.* 3:9. paſt with them for ſuch a *ſuperlative wiſdom*, as gave them inſolence to diſcriminate themſelves from others by that ſwelling *Title*, and monopolize the reputation of *Science*, which yet if we will believe the great Doctor of the *Gentiles*, and he too brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*, the greateſt *Rabbi* of the *Jews*, was *ſcience* falſly ſo called. And God knows, they want not ſucceſſors in this as well as in other particulars; men are ſo poſſeſt with their own *Phancies*, that they take them for *Oracles*, and think they ſee viſions, and are arrived to ſome Extraordinary *revelations* of Truth, when indeed they do but dream *dreams*, and amuſe themſelves with the Phantaſtick *Ideas* of a buſie imagination. Yet would they only pleaſe themſelves in the deluſion, the Phrenſie were more innocent; but like the prouder ſort of *Lunaticks*, they will needs be *Kings* and *Rulers*, impoſe their wild *conjectures* for *Laws* upon others, and denounce *War* againſt all that receive them not. And this is that which makes the great combuſtion, and confuſion among us; for while one man opines one way, another another, and each will obtrude his *opinion* on every body elſe: 'tis impoſſible but the *conteſts* ſhould be ſharp and endleſs; for each man labours under a double Impatience, the *one* of having his own notions rejected, the other of having the quite contrary impos'd on him; and though 'tis true the *reciprocalneſs* of the Injury ought to allay the *diſpleaſure* at it, yet men ſo much more conſider what they *ſuffer* than what they *do*, that every one cries out aloud of that hard meaſure, which himſelf offers without regret. And between *winds* ſo contrary and ſo fierce, 'tis no wonder if *ſtorms* ariſe; and in ſuch *Tempeſts* has Religion ſo long been toſſed, that it now needs the interpoſition of a divine *Miraculous power*, to keep it from ſinking; for alas, theſe *Skirmiſhes* expire not with the firſt Propugners of the Opinions; they perhaps began as *ſingle Duellers*, but then they ſoon get their troops about them, have their *partiſans* and *abetters*, who not only enhance, but entail the feud to poſterity. And indeed this propaga-

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tion of Strife, both in these *trifling* and the former more *profound* speculations, is the most fatal circumstance of the whole Case: Were it not for this, though we might have *many Errors*, we could have *no Sects*. And if the Church might be sometimes wounded with the *darts* of single Adversaries, yet she could not be surrounded and besieg'd with *combinations* and *confederacies*. Some straggling Souldiers might prove *renegadoes*, but they would not revolt in *troops* and *legions*. We should not have such numerous Parties, who with the greatest violation of Christian unity, denominate themselves, not from the *grand author and finisher of our Faith*; but from the *first broacher of their Idoliz'd opinions*. In the mean time, 'tis a sad contemplation, that a little *vain curiosity* should weigh so much, or the Churches *peace* so little with us: that we should sacrifice the one, to the *satisfaction*, shall I say, or rather to the *whetting* and *inflaming* of the other. But 'tis a yet sadder, that this should chiefly be done by those whose *learning* enables, and whose *profession* should devote to the most noble and most profitable Studies; nay, have the highest obligations to correct those *exorbitancies* in others, which with such *art* and *labour* they propagate and teach. How wounding a spectacle is it to see our greatest *Heroes* like *Hercules* at the *Distaffe*, thus degenerously employed, and to find those who were by Christ design'd for *fishers of Men*, thus entertain themselves like *Children*, with *picking up Shells* and *Pebbles* on the shore; and which is yet more unmanly, *wrangling* about them too. Indeed at this rate, 'tis no wonder if they make the *disciples* Complaint, *We have travelled all night and have taken nothing*. This sure is so little the way to win Souls, that he whose business it is to destroy them, can very contentedly refer them to this method; can gladly leave us all our nice and subtle *disquisitions*, upon the very same score that one of the *Gothick* Commanders advised the sparing of the *Italian Schools* and *Libraries*; Let us, says he, leave them their Books, that whilst they amuse themselves with such *follies*, we may subdue them at our *pleasure*. It is the saying of the Wise man, *There is a wisdom that multiplieth bitterness*; and sure if there be a wisdom acquired by these curious Enquiries, 'tis of this sort, like the Knowledge

ledge of Good and Evil attained by our first Parents, which taught them to know the Good only by its *loss*, and the Evil by its *smart*. Indeed our too high, and transcending *speculations* on the one hand, and our too trivial and unprofitable on the other; are like the *torrid* and *frigid* Zones, the one consumes us with its *heat*, the other chills, and benumns us with its *cold*; that turns us to *Cinders*, this to *Ice*. These little trifling Notions being too slight an exercise to keep *heat* in our Christianity, which not only expresses but maintains its *life* by strong and vigorous Motions. And therefore between these *two intemperate*, God has provided us an *habitable Clime*, I mean that middle rank of divine truths which tend to practice. Here he would have us dwell and converse, fix our thoughts and studies: Nor need we fear that they are too dry a subject for our contemplation. We see as deep Speculators, as any now assume to be, found it far otherwise. *David* could entertain himself with the *Meditations of Gods Law* (not his hidden Decrees or counsels) *all the day*, *Psal.* 119: 97. Nay, it seems, the Matter was so *copious* and *redundant*, that it could not be confin'd within that *narrow boundary* of Time, but invaded the *night* also; forced him to defaulk from his *rest*, to bestow on his *meditations*, *I have thought of thy Name*, O *Lord*, *in the night season*, *and have kept thy Law*, Verse 55. Neither is it a vain expence of Time, which it thus tempts to, but gives the happiest improvement; lands at that harbour to which all rational studies tend, gives understanding, Verse 130. *makes wise the simple*, *Psal.* 19: 7. and this also in an eminent degree, such as set him above his teachers, and his Elders also. *Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine Enemies. I have more understanding than my teachers, for thy testimonies are my study. I am wiser than the aged, because I keep thy commandments*, *Psal.* 119: 98, 99, 100. These are high and liberal Elogies of this divine study, and if any shall seek to divert, an unwelcome inference by saying that *David* spoke them only in pious raptures, that they were the transport of his *zeal*, rather than the estimate of his *judgement*; we must resolve the objector far removed from such religious *excesses*, and under the contrary *defect*; yet the *cause* will so well bear an *appeal*, that he may be trusted to consult farther; let him advice with *Solomon*, whose large desires and possessions too

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of wisdom, must suppose him no stranger to its nature, and he will tell him the very same, and that not in his *devouter ecstasies*, but in his most *compos'd sedate temper*, when he solemnly seats himself in his School, reads *Ethicks* to his disciples, and professes his design of giving *subtilty* to the simple, and to the young man *knowledge* and *discretion*, *Prov.* 1:4. For if his whole book of *Proverbs* be scanned, the summ of it will be found to be nothing else but an *exhortation* to the study of this practick Wisdom. Nay when his own *understanding* was improv'd and advanc'd by *experience* also, when he had not only *begg'd* but *bought* wisdom, after he had given his Curiosity its full unbounded Range, compassed the whole Universe and examin'd not only in *contemplation*, but by sensitive *experiment*, whatever therein could pretend to be that good for the sons of Men, *Eccl.* 2:3. we find after all this busie inquest, he gives up his *verdict* in this form, *Eccl.* 12:13. Let us hear the end of the whole matter, *Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the Whole Duty of Man*: And now methinks so solemn a decision of the wisest of Men, and he too inspir'd by the Omniscient God, may be thought of weight enough to acquiesce in. Yet since there are some who love not to weigh in the balance of the Sanctuary, and that had rather receive Responses from *Delphos* than from between the *Cherubims*: Let such at least hear even the Heathen Oracle attesting *Socrates* to be the wisest man, because he directed his studies to the *moral part* of Learning, which he did to such a degree, as to disparage all those more *Aiery speculations*, which better'd not mens Manners, but were only λόγων ψόφος, *a noise and clattering of Words*. And *Pythagoras* his School defines Philosophy, ζωῆς ἀνθρωπίνης κάθαρσιν καὶ τελειότητα, *the cleansing and perfecting humane life*, which two things are said to be done, first by *Vertue*, whose business it is to remove τὴν ἀκαταστασίαν τῶν παθῶν, *the inordination of our Passions*: Secondly, by *Truth*, which restores θείαν εἰκόνα, *the Image and pourtraicture of God*. And since this is the joynt suffrage both of Religion and Reason, why should those that pretend to either defie both, and vainly consume themselves in unprofitable searches? Why should men wander to seek *beggary* and emptiness, who may with far less labour be *rich* at home? Alas, 'tis not *bare knowledge*, how great or universal soever, that

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can possess us of *felicity*. Were it possible for us to have a window into *Heaven*, to see all the Divine secrets, yet that might be but like the Rich mans prospect into *Abrahams* bosom, while himself was in the *bottomless pit*. They are not only the *gross* and *illiterate Souls* that must feed those *flames*, the most *Aerial* and *Sublimated* are rather the more proper fuel for an *immaterial Fire*, and the knowledge we carry thither, renders us the fitter company for him, who knew every thing but how to keep himself happy. It was once the Observation and Wonder of *Plutarch*, that whereas God has several *incommunicable properties*, as Power and Immortality, *&c.* these all men aspir'd to, in the mean time neglected that of *Goodness*, wherein he was willing all men should share. And sure there is now cause of the same complaint, we would have Omniscience and all parts of Divinity besides the holiness, yet alas, those without these would prove but fatal acquests, and that approach towards being *Gods*, would only make us the more *Devils*. The only advantagious as well as possible *way* of Assimilation with God is by *purity*, and the *means* of that an Attentive consideration of those *Divine revelations*, which are to regulate our practice; these at once dispense *light* and *warmth*, direct and revive the Soul: And if men would not exhale *vapours* to cloud and darken them, Eclipse the clearest Truths by *difficulties* of their own creating, no man could miss his way to Heaven for want of light, and yet so vain are they as to think they oblige the world by involving it in darkness, as if their *Mists* should like that *which Watered the new form'd Earth*, *Gen.* 2:6. supply the place of the *dew* of Heaven. But certainly to all such in their profusest liberalities, we need make no other Request than *Diogenes* did to *Alexander*, desire them only that they will not stand between *us* and the *Sun*, intercept its rays, and rob us of that which is infinitely better than any thing they can give us. Were this but obtain'd, we should soon discern the inconsiderableness of those things whose effects have been so sadly considerable to Christendom; those many *Chimæras* which we wrangle and fight about, would in this Sun shine appear but *Motes* that dance in the Air, (though God knows as we manage them, they are the most luxurious Rebels to the Prince that rules there.) Were but *S. Pauls* doctrine throughly imbib'd, our Curious Arts, περίεργα γεγιμνασται, *super-*

superfluous unconcerned studies, would as it happened, *Acts* 19. be supplanted; and our *devotion* if sufficiently accended, would as theirs, *burn up* innumerable *books* of this sort. And sure as this would be the *greatest*, so it would be the most *triumphant Bonfire* Christendom ever saw, as being not only an *indication*, but a *means* of the *mighty growth*, and prevailing of the Word of God, which our vain *Curiosities* serve only to impede and obstruct, while they do as mightily advance *dissentions* and *animosities* amongst men.

CHAP. XV.

A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; Thirdly, Interest.

BUT besides these *two*, there is a *third* Fomenter of divisions, which either for its activity or success must not subscribe to either of them, and that is *Interest*. This is the great *Idol* to which the world bows: To this we pay our devoutest homage, give it not only our *knees*, but our *hearts*; and as if the making us rich were a *second* Creation, that could cancel all the obligations of the *first*, we sacrilegiously entitle our profit to all the Prerogatives of a Creator, give it an absolute unlimited dominion over us, allow it to prescribe us all our measures of good and evil; to rule not only our *Reason* but our *Passions* too, (a Soveraignty, alas, we would never yield to our God) and as if the *giving* us *laws* were not Empire enough, we permit it to impose *Religions* also; for sure they that observe how great an influence it has in *Church-affairs*, will conclude it governs more than the *secular* part of the world. And indeed if we look back, we shall find 'tis no *novel usurpation*, but though void of other Title, has the Prescription of *many ages*. Divinity has long since been made the handmaid of Policy, and Religions modelled by conveniencies of State. The golden *Calves* became venerable *deities*, when they were found apt to secure *Jeroboams* Jealousies: And *Machiavels* policy, that *States should serve themselves of Religion*, was a common practice long before 'twas his Rule. And this Example of Communities has been

been transcrib'd by single Persons. In the Old Testament we find frequent mention of those *mercenary* Prophets, that turn'd the *office* into a *trade*, divin'd for *money*, nay, sometimes for more contemptible hire, *handfuls of Barley* and *pieces of Bread*: And in the New we see the same motive of Secular advantage had force enough to turn an *Ecclesiastick* into a *Laick*, make *Demas* degrade himself, and desert his Ministry, and as it thus stopt his mouth from preaching the *Truth*, so it open'd those of Others to divulge *Errors*. Such were those deceivers of whom *S. Paul* speaks, *Tit.* 1: 11. *Who speake things they ought not for filthy lucres sake.* So when the same Apostle declaims the most earnestly against the *love of money as the root of all evil*, we find he fetches his proof of that Charge from its having *made men err from the faith*, 1 *Tim.* 6: 10. And 'tis *S. Peters* prediction, that the most damnable Heresies, even the *denying of the Lord that bought them*, should be introduced by *those*, who through Covetousness should make *merchandize* of their *Proselytes*, 2 *Pet.* 2: 4. and sure the *event* attests the *presage* to have concern'd more than the Age immediately succeeding, there being none of the subsequent which hath not in some degree assisted its completion; nor have we cause to wonder *hereat*, since 'tis obvious to discern the conjunction and dependence between Covetousness and Heresie. For the *Itching ears*, the Apostle speaks of, being an *Epidemick disease*, give fair opportunity to every *Mountebank* to try his *Experiments*. When men nauseat *Old* truths, because they are acquainted with them, and embrace doctrines for the very same reason, they should reject them, even because they are *New*: When they love no Teachers, but such as thus entertain them, and are bountiful to none but such as they love; there is little doubt, but there will be *Mints* enough set on work, when the *Coiners* can thus at once *stamp new opinions* for their Disciples, and *Money* for themselves: And God knows they are not a *few* of our Divisions, that have thence taken *birth*. It will be needless to ravel far into the Records of Elder times, every mans memory will be able to suggest to him too many, and too pertinent instances. Upon which reflection 'twill be too visible, that much of some mens late pretense to *Godliness* was but a real pursuit of *Gain*; and the *new light* serv'd to guide them to their *neighbours Coffers*: And probably many of our Disputes had

had been superseded, had not the Authors foreseen, that though they lost the Question, they should gain what they more sought. A few essays had discover'd how much the *Populacy* were pleas'd with *Novelties*, especially such as at once gratified their *Levity* and their *Pride*, by casting ill reflections on the things or Persons to whom they owed a reverence; and the *liberal contributions* such Teachers met with, serv'd still to invite more *labourers* into that *work*, where without the uneasiness of a long Expectation, their very *seed-time* was their *Harvest*, and by sowing *Tares*, they immediately reaped *Gold*; And 'tis no wonder if such *quick returns* made them *diligent* at the trade, industrious to provide those wares they saw they could put off so well. And would to God we were secure, that *this way* of Traffick were yet at an end, for so long as these *spiritual Merchants* can thus impose on their *credulous Chapmen*, make them buy one mischief with another, and exhaust their *Estates* to endanger their *Souls*, we must not hope our *dissentions* will ever cease, our *flames* ever be extinct, that have so much *matter* to feed them, and such *importunate blasts* to blow them up.

BUT *covetousness* is of too unsatiable a nature to be contented with one way of supply, 'tis like the *Sea*, that receives the Tribute of *all Rivers* (though far unlike it in lending any back again) and therefore those who have resolv'd upon the *thriveing sort* of Piety, have seldom embarkt all their *hopes* in one *bottom*, nor so depended on the *bounty* of their Proselytes, as to neglect other *ways of preying* for themselves. They wanted not providence to foresee, how uncertain a revenue popular benevolence is: That the same giddy and violent *humour*, which had opened their hands *so wide*, might by working another way close them *as fast*; or if their *inclinations* continued, their *abilities* might fail; (a thing very possible to those, who have such suckers) or if both these remain'd, yet that they were unlikely to grow in proportion to their own appetites, and therefore found it necessary to have some other reserve; and besides, this way of *flattering* their willing *benefactors* out of part, contriv'd another of *forcing* their unwilling Neighbours out of all their *possessions*: So making the spoils of some mens *honesty* a richer booty than that of others *folly*. Hence *Shibboleths* found out of Covenants and Engagements,

ments, to give opportunity of destroying a dissenting brother; by this Art a *fat benefice* became *crime* and *witness* too against its Incumbent, and he was sure to be *unorthodox*, that was worth the *plundering*. Thus alas, has the *Altar* of God been attended, or rather invaded by those whose very *approach* was a *guilt*, that qualified them rather to lay hold on its *horns*, than pretend to its *service*; for sure that God, who has declar'd he hates *robbery* for *burnt-offering*, cannot much affect *Robbers* for *Priests*. But this is a Theme so unpleasant, I delight not to enlarge on it, and rather wish that the memory of it were so extinct, that it might remain no where but in the penitential Litanies of the Offenders; my design in the present reflection is only to make it an evidence how much *covetousness* promotes our *contentions*, which sure is not more visible any where than in this instance: For where there is a design of supplanting, that necessarily requires another of accusing; (even *Jezebel* her self projects not to seize on *Naboths* Vineyard without a precedent *Charge*) to comply with which necessity, not only the *lives* and *conversations*, but the *doctrines* and *opinions* of our most eminent Divines have been strangely misrepresented, and when that proved not *fence* enough to the *reputation* of their Oppressors, they have thought fit to change the *Scene*, and to combate those *opinions* in their *true Shape*, upon which they could not so well fasten their *disguise*. I shall not here need to say with how much, or how little pretext of reason they managed those Disputes: 'Tis enough to my purpose that such Disputes there were, and those founded in the desire of acquiring secular advantages, which sufficiently attests *Interest* to be a potent *Abettor* of our quarrels.

BUT God knows that is a truth of which the *world* affords so many proofs, that we need not confine our selves to this little *Angle* of it, or ow our *convictions* only to our *domestick transactions*; if we look abroad we shall find it too often exemplified. The memorable *disturbance* given to the Church, as well as State of *Germany* by the *Anabaptists*, is a pregnant instance; whose *new opinion* was but an expedient of investing themselves in *new possessions*, and their *second Baptism* but the Solemnity of espousing, not only the *flesh*, but the *world* also, which they had renounced in the *first*.

AND would God they had been the only Sect of Men, whose

whose *doctrines* were subservient to their *interests*; for such tumultuous and *Plebeian projects*, though like a *land-floud* they make great spoil at the present, yet soon sink again. Such avowed and *excessive greedines* devours *it self*, and the *instruments* by which it wrought: so that the *defeat* of the secular Design, is commonly the *routing* those Opinions, which were formed for the promoting it. But when the same desire has the advantage of a sober guidance; when *Avarice* puts on the *Canonical habit*, and twists it self not only with the *practice* of Men, but the *doctrines* of the Church; when *Articles* of Religion shall be estimated by their *profitableness*, and Ecclesiasticks *dispute*, as Lay men *fight for Money*: then alas, the *mischief* seems fatal, the *disease* so fixt and radicated, as at once discourages, and mocks the attempts of *cure*.

THAT this is the case not only in a *particular* and *private* Church, but that which assumes to be the *Universal* and *Catholick*, is too apparent. The one Position of the Popes right to dispose Kingdoms, out-strips all other principles of rapine: this is to drive a *whole-sale* trade, when all other petty Merchants deal but for *parcels*: which as it is a much *bolder*, so is it a more *prejudicial* attempt than the invading of private possessions, and these *Duo gladii*, the double armature of *S. Peter*, a more destructive Engin, than the tumultuary weapon snatcht up by a *Fanatick*: but sure *S. Peters sword* though once rashly managed by himself, was never design'd to arm his *successors* to invade Kingdoms: This *property* of it seems rather to have been deriv'd from the *Prætorian Soldiers*, who insolently assumed the disposing of the Empire, wherein they at the last arrived to that *impudence*, that after the Death of *Pertinax* they made *open porsale* of it αἰσχρῶς καὶ ἀτίμως, ὥσπερ καὶ ἰδιωτικῆς κτημάτων, *in a base and sordid manner, as if it had been of common marketable wares*: I cannot say the Court of *Rome* transcribes that indecent owning of the traffick; but it has in other instances so well attested its good managery, that 'tis not very credible, that Crowns and Scepters are conferred *gratis*. And to *this* so advantageous a Doctrine *others* bear proportion: Those of *Purgatory*, *Indulgences*, and *supererogation*, are ready instances; wherein the *Assertors* themselves seem to be unanimous in nothing but in a joynt reference to profit; for when they

come to minute definitions they vary and disagree; satisfie one another, as little as their common *Antagonists:* and therefore in the Council of *Trent* they prudently chose in their decrees to propose the bare *Articles* backt by the Authority of the Church, and *Anathemas* of the Council, as having by precedent *discussions* of the points in their congregations discern'd the small *accord* that was among themselves, when they descended to *particulars*. And indeed the *Opinions* were so various as to the grounds of the Doctrines, that one would wonder how from so differing *premises*, they should all infer the same *conclusion*; were it not that the *conspiration* of Interest was too potent for the *diversity* of Judgement. And sure 'twas a strange deference was given to it, when in the matter of *Indulgences*, there was (by the Testimony of their own Writers) four *different* Opinions, and yet all *Catholick:* which moderation towards *Speculative* dissenters, compar'd with the great severity against those that opposed its *Practice*, speaks loud enough that the *Orthodoxy* of the point lay wholly in the *Profitableness*; and that *Luther* himself had been no *Heretick*, had he busied himself only in such disquisitions, as impeded not the *gain* of that Doctrine. Nor is this merely surmise and conjecture, for if we consult the *memorials* of those transactions, we shall find *this* was the thing that most alarm'd *Rome*, put that Court in almost as great a *commotion*, as the *birth* of Christ did *Herods:* and accordingly in their private consults, the closer *cabals* of the Colledge; the *securing* this part of their invaded treasure was the grand *deliberation*, upon which account it was, that when *Adrian* shewed some Inclination to the reforming abuses both in this and other instances, one of his *Cardinals* who better knew the intrigues of affairs, admonisht him against that unskilful piece of *Ingenuity*, not only from the example of his *Predecessors*, who were resolute never to confess Faults by *mending* them, but by *representing* to him, "That no *reformation* could be made, which would not nota-"bly diminish the *rents* of the Church, which having four "foundations, the one *Temporal*, the other three *Spiritual*, "Indulgences, Dispensations, and Collations of *Benefices*; "no one of them could be stopped but that one quarter of the "revenues would be cut off. What a resemblance this advice carries to the oration of *Demetrius* to his fellow crafts men,

men, *Acts* 19: 25. I need not stand to demonstrate, but while such considerations as this, bear sway in Church matters, where *Profit* shall be the *Touch-stone* both for faith and manners, we are not to wonder if no *gainful Tenet* be deposited; or *Peace* bought with that which in most mens esteem is of far more value.

AND this is it which ominates sadly as to our divisions with the *Romanists*, were our *differences* merely the product of Heat and Passion, they would like the *smaller clefts* in the ground, want nothing but a *cooler season* to cement and close them: but when they are thus form'd into an *interest*, become the Design not of *single persons* or *ages*, but of *corporations* and *successions*; the Breach seems like the *scissures* and *ruptures* of an Earthquake, and threatens to swallow all that attempt to close it, and reserves its cure only for omnipotence. Indeed till *spiritual* and *secular* Concerns be reduced into their proper ranks, which are now mixt and confounded, the better to disguise the preposterous subordination of the nobler to the inferiour; till we have forgotten the unhappy *Chymistry* of turning *all*, even *Religion* it self *into Gold*, we must never hope to get out of the *Furnace*; our *flames* will still grow fiercer, and with this unnatural *effect* to consume not the *Dross*, but the purer *Metal*. In a word, till men can sever themselves from their *Avarice* and mean pursuits of gain, they will never cease to separate from their *brethren*. For as the most *soveraign Balsams* cannot cure a hurt while the *arrow* remains in the flesh: so neither can the most *pacifick Remedies* at all avail, so long as the same *worldly Aims*, which made the wound, still stick in it.

BUT in the mean time 'tis a *Melancholick* consideration that Christianity should be by its Professors thus unworthily prostituted; that the many various and opposite Religions, for which we severally pretend so much zeal, should be but divers ways to the same irreligious End; wherein our *Elders* seem to resemble those in the Story of *Susanna*, who when they meant to *part* with each other, yet did unawares meet by the impulse of the same Lust. We find, it moved the *patience* even of the *Lamb of God*, to see his Fathers *house* made a house of *merchandize*, though the Traffick was for the furnishing of Sacrifices: with what abhorrence must we think does he

now behold those, who drive so much a worse trade in it: who sell not *accommodations* for worship, but the *worship* it self to accommodate their *interests*, and do not only make Gain *in* the Temple, but *of* it? A thing the sacrilegious Rapine of our days has made literally true, where besides the *revenues*, the very *fabrick* and *materials* of Churches, have been *marketable ware*: *Judas*'s good husbandry has been taken up, and *ad quid Perditio hæc?* put as the *common Motto* upon every thing that could be sold for *more*, nay sometimes for *less* than *Three hundred pence*. And as *Dionysius* took away the golden beard from *Æsculapius*, to rectifie the indecency of the Sons having a beard when the Father had none: and *Julian* robb'd the Christian Altars with this *impious Sarcasm*, ἐν πολοις σκύφοις καταπλέτει ὁ Μαρίας υἱός· that *'twas unfit the Son of Mary should be serv'd in Plate*. So do men now a days make themselves *regulators* of holy things, correct the *indecorums* of the Sanctuary, that they may rifle its *treasures*. Thus do we see the Apostles affirmation sadly verified, that *those who will be rich fall into Temptation, and a snare*, 1 *Tim.* 6:9. Such is the greediness of a *covetous appetite*, that it swallows indiscriminately whatever looks like *prize*, and rather than it want its prey, God *Himself* shall be *robb'd*. Nay, 'twere to be wisht in this instance, that That were all; but alas, he is *mockt* too, used not only *unjustly*, but *contumeliously*; we thus make him a property to our sordid designs, and when he has profest that he will not be serv'd together with *Mammon*, we attempt that which is yet far more blasphemous, and make him pay service to him with whom he disdains to share it when paid by others.

NEITHER is Covetousness the only *Vice* that serves its interest upon Religion: but as 'tis made a *factor* for that, so it is a *cloak* and *disguise* for many other. Of this the Catalogues of primitive *Heresiarchs* give sufficient witness; divers whereof as the *Nicolaitans*, *Cerinthians*, *Carpocratians*, and *Gnosticks* seem to have constituted distinct sects in *Christianity*, only that they might introduce the most bestial parts of *Heathenism*, and pretend an association in *Religion*, when indeed it was in *lust*. How far some of our modern Sects resemble them in this Particular, I will not undertake to pronounce: though there want not those who make *severe*, and not *improbable* Con-

Conjectures concerning it. But whether that be the main deſign or no; 'tis certain both that wickedneſs, and many other find great ſhelter among them. He that brings *reſolution* to uphold a Faction ſhall not miſs of *Entertainment*, how many or how great vices ſoever he brings with it; and *he* that is of a *godly party*, ſhall in ſpight of the loudeſt Guilts be a *goodly man*. So *meritorious* a thing is it in ſome mens account to be *factious*, that *it covers the multitude of ſins*: hence it is that *Criminals* ſo frequently fly to new Churches for *Sanctuary*: and 'twill ſtill be the concern of ſuch to have ſo creditable a *Refuge*; and therefore we are not to wonder if *this* Intereſt combine with the *former* in promoting our Diſſentions.

BUT alas, as it advances *thoſe*, ſo does it our *guilt* too, that have more than one vile end to which we accommodate our Piety: and ſtill implies the greater *affront* to our God, by how many the more and baſer *intereſts* we ſhroud under his Patronage. Alas, is it not enough, as *Job* ſpeaks, *to hide our iniquities in our own boſoms*, but muſt we wrap them in the *Veil* of the *Sanctuary*? We read that *Goats* once lent a *covering* for the Tabernacle; but here by an impious Inverſion, the *Tabernacle* muſt lend a *covering* to the Goats: The moſt *beſtial appetites* be both concealed and preſerved under the *Shadow* of Religion. *Plutarch* tells us that when *Marcellus* would have conſecrated a *Temple* joyntly to Honour and Virtue, the *Prieſts* reſiſted it, ſaying *two Gods dwelt not in one Church*: and if their *vain deities* exacted ſuch a ſolemnity of Reſpect, and would not be Inmates to *one another*, can we think the *true God* will be content to be made ſo to all our *vileſt luſts*? This is ſure the higheſt Contumely to the divine Majeſty; and never could the *abomination of deſolation* more properly be ſaid to ſtand in the *holy place* than in *this ſence*: for as the *natures* of theſe Guilts are fitly expreſt by *abomination*, ſo is the *effect* of them by *deſolation*; they having brought the moſt *fatal miſchiefs* on the Church.

AND now would God all that are concern'd in this guilt, would ſoberly ponder the weight of it. There are *two things* of which God has expreſt himſelf peculiarly Tender, his *honour* and his *Church*; this is the invading him in both; the expoſing the *one* to Reproach and Contempt, and the *other* to

Ruine and Destruction; and doubtless were there nothing of the *former*, this *later* alone must be sadly accounted for. It remains yet a Character of infamy upon *Achan*, that he troubled *Israel* to enrich himself: and on *Balaam*, that *he not only loved the wages of iniquity*, but *ensnared the people in uncleanness*: and sure the same with many aggravations belongs to those, who by the like unworthy practice, have not only rendred the Church a prey to *foreigners*, but made it so to *it self*; engag'd one part of it against another, till the whole is so wasted, that our *Religion* seems now nearer extinction, than our *quarrels* about it.

CHAP. XVI.

A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; Fourthly, Passion.

A FOURTH grand contributer to our dissentions is *Passion*, which being by God and nature placed in a subserviency to reason, when it quits its *proper station* and assumes *empire*, it must needs disorder and subvert not only the State of the *Mind*, but of *every thing* upon which it has an Influence. I shall not here attempt any *Philosophical* discourse either of their *nature* or *number*; all that concerns the present enquiry falls under one of these two, our *love*, or our *hate*; and is either Kindness and Prepossession, or Spight and Prejudice: For the *first* of these 'tis a thing which *common experience* attests to be a most forcible corrupter of the understanding, which being by native right design'd a *Judge*, is by this interrupted in its *office*, not permitted to make those impartial Enquiries, on which a right *sentence* should be founded: But (as it fares sometimes with *Magistrates* in Popular insurrections) forced to give countenance to its own *violation*, to own not its proper native dictates, but such as are presented to it, by the prejudicate Phancy. And as it thus lays restraint upon the *superior* part of the Mind, keeps the understanding in fetters, so (to complete the inversion) it takes off all ties from the *inferiour*: Gives not only *licence*, but *incitation* to the other Passions

Paſſions to take their freeſt range, to act with the utmoſt impetuoſity. And ſure there can nothing more be requir'd, to render it a moſt apt *inſtrument* of Tumult and Confuſion. For when every *opinion* that is taken up, ſhall inſtead of *reaſon* and *argument*, arm it ſelf with *heat* and *violence*, there can be no end of contending. And the truth of this is, God knows, too ſadly diſcernible in our *Church controverſies*, which derive a great deal of their *warmth* and *bitterneſs* from this Fountain.

OF this prepoſſeſſion there are two Sorts, the one relating to *Doctrine*, the other to *Perſons*; by the firſt I mean not a ſober conſtancy to thoſe principles which being firſt imbibed by *education*, are afterwards retain'd upon *Judgement*, but an eager *tenacity* of Opinions, not ſo much upon *Truth* or *Evidence*, as upon a confus'd irrational *kindneſs*; a *Platonick love* of ſome Doctrines merely for themſelves, and then making them the *ſtandards*, by which all others are to be meaſured: And this kind of Prepoſſeſſion is no Stranger in the world, there being multitudes of men, who aſſert opinions with all imaginable vehemence, who can give no better ground of it, but becauſe they like them: And as the wiſer ſort *chuſe* a Tenet, becauſe 'tis *right*, ſo theſe conclude 'tis *right*, becauſe they have *choſen* it. And having thus enamour'd themſelves of their *Helena*, they expect all ſhould adore, nor can he eſcape the note of Prophaneneſs that refuſes. By this abſurd partiality it is, that ſome *doctrines*, which would themſelves ill abide the *Teſt*, are become the *Touch-ſtone* both of Doctrines and Men, and no Opinion or Perſon ſanctified which bears not this impreſs. I need not ſtand to give inſtances, either of the *Doctrines* or the unhappy *influence* this eſpouſing of them has had on our diſſentions; bnt indeed this kind of *Prepoſſeſſion* is oftentimes the *conſequent* of another; and this great *veneration* of ſome Opinions is founded in the *reverence* of their Authors. Men take up a confidence of the *learning* or *ſanctity* of a Perſon, and then all his *notions* are received implicitely, ſtrictly embraced, but not ſo much as ſlightly examined, and this *admiration* of mens Perſons, has in all ages been of huge *miſchief* to the Church, has nurſt up *private* Phancies into ſolemn *publick* Errors, and given an unhappy perpetuity to many *Heterodox opinions*, which would elſe have expired with their *firſt propugners*. This ſeems to have been foreſeen by *S. Paul*, when

he ſo earneſtly exhorts the *Corinthians* againſt the aſcribing their *Faith* to their ſeveral reſpective *Teachers*: But ſure I am, 'twas ſadly experimented by the *ſucceeding Chriſtians*, who owed many of their *diviſions* to it. A pregnant inſtance hereof was the *Millennium*, which in ſpight of its improbability prevail'd *long*, and almoſt *univerſally* againſt the *Truth* upon the ſtrength of *Authority*. *Papias* a holy man and Scholar of *S. John*, having delivered it, the *eſteem* of his Perſon canoniz'd his *miſtake*, and men choſe rather to admit a *doctrine*, whoſe unagreeableneſs to the Goſpel-Oeconomy rendred it ſuſpicious, than think an *Apoſtolick man* could ſeduce them. And the force of this is yet more conſiderable, when 'tis remembred that it found *proſelytes*, not only among the *Vulgar*, who are commonly flexible to any new Impreſſion, but among thoſe of a *higher rank*, men that were *lights* in their generation: *Juſtin Martyr* and *Irenæus* having own'd the *Opinion*, and intimated it to have been received by many others no leſs *Orthodox*; and if ſuch a ſeduction could prevail, ſo early in thoſe purer times, before mens intereſts or ſpleen were adopted into their Religion, and begot voluntary errors, if I ſay the *mere reputation* of a Teacher was then ſingly ſo operative; we cannot wonder at its efficacy in conjunction with thoſe *auxiliaries*, which worſer times have brought in. What concurrence of thoſe there was in the ſeveral *Hereſies*, which after infeſted the *Church*, I ſhall not now examine, but 'tis viſible that many of them grew conſiderable, chiefly from the *fame* of their Authors; thus *Tatianus* upon the credit of being *Juſtin Martyrs* diſciple, had an advantage to diſſeminate his errors, and not only his, but thoſe of *Origen*, *Apollinaris* and *Novatus*, gain'd abettors from the *reputed Orthodoxy* of the Perſons that propos'd them, who having aſſerted the Faith in *ſome* points, were qualified the more proſperouſly to oppoſe it in *others*.

NOR has it been only the miſhap of elder times to have felt the miſchiefs of ſuch prepoſſeſſion; the *diſeaſe* has ſtill advanced, and every day improved in worſe *effect*, by how much men have more degenerated from *primitive integrity*; ſo that the *eaſie Proſelyte* is now in danger, not only from the *blindneſs*, but the *treachery* of his guide, and is often led out of the *common road*, as *thieves* draw paſſengers into *by-ways* for the

the better opportunity of robbing them: But 'tis not my present business to send *Hue and cry* after them, to examine what the intentions of those *leaders* are, who misguide their tractable admiring *followers*: 'tis enough for my purpose to observe, that those who so deliver up themselves in a blind assent to the dictates of any man, are in his power to be abused by him if he pleases: I shall leave it to others, to estimate the *probability* that they shall not be actually so: But certainly this may be said, that these *later* ages have beyond al the *former* given Opportunities of seducing to any that will use them. The one establisht Doctrine of *infallibility* among the *Romanists* is eminent for its propriety that way, while under pretence of *submission* to something they call *Infallible*, 'tis evident that the *faith* of the ignorant Vulgar resolves it self into that which they acknowledge most *fallible*; the Doctrine of their immediate Teachers. But indeed take it at the best, such a *persuasion* is not only an *error* in it self, and an apt *foundation* for innumerable others, but it necessarily renders them incorrigible; the least retractation of a *mistake* being so inconsistent with the claim of *infallibility*, that while they retain the *one*, they must never attempt the *other*, nor can they cease to Err, till they confess it possible they may do so. How much more than possible that has been, the many Innovations of that Church sufficiently witness; and consequently the danger of presuming upon the unerrableness of a guide. But would all that *upbraid* it there, were themselves *secure* from it, and that many did not in their practice transcribe that *decried doctrine*, and that too with the improvement of worse *circumstances*. I must call them *worse*, by how much the *probabilities* of Erring are *greater* under the extemporary conduct of a *Private person*, than the fixt rules of a *community*, and by how much again the voluntary enslaving my self is more excuseless, than that which the principles of my Profession, and consequently a seeming obligation of Conscience exposes me to. And as to the matter of Fact, I think 'tis evident enough, that the *admiration* of mens Persons is a *spreading disease* that has over-run Christendom; and though a great part of it inveigh against *implicit faith*, yet if it be throughly scanned, 'twill appear 'tis rather the *object* than the *act* we differ about. He that vehemently opposes that homage to the *Conclave*, will yet tame-

ly pay it to a *Classis*: and he that refuses it there, yields it to the Votes of a *Congregational Church*; or if he hold out against that too, yet chuses to himself some *private Teacher* on which to cast it; Like *Micah*, *Judg.* 16. *Makes him a Teraphim and a Priest too, for his private use*; and then confidently consults his *Oracle*, and has nothing to do but believe its *responses*. Nay, that which makes the matter yet more sadly ridiculous, is that the very Opposition to *one* Usurpation makes them deliver themselves up to *another*. How many, when they have heard a *Preacher* rail fiercely at the *Pope*, have presently made him *theirs*, and supposing that Zeal an *indication of a safe guide*, have given him as *absolute a rule* of their Consciences, as that he exclaim'd against (perhaps Envied) elsewhere? And the like instances might be given among our other dissenting parties. And this has taught some Seducers a lucky artifice, made them observe to what opinions their Proselytes had the greatest aversion, and by complying with their *anger* so steal away their *love*, that they might after lead them to what they *pleas'd*, yea, perhaps to that which they so much detested: For there want not examples of some, who have by back ways been brought to those Opinions, which at first they most defied. What have been the *attempts* or *success* of the Emissaries of *Rome* this way, I shall not pronounce, though some (not inprobably) speak them *great*.

FROM this blind and passionate *esteem* of several Teachers have flowed many *pernicious consequents*, particularly those distinct Appellations, which form *differences* into *Sects*, many of which expresly own *this original*, by bearing the names of their *first Authors*. I might here put them in mind, that they are *illegitimate persons*, whom our Law directs to write with an *alias*, and ask them, *Whether the Church from their superinduced name, has not cause so to repute them*. But I am sure I may with the utmost seriousness say, that this *practice* is to the great *violation* of Christian unity, and *reproach* of Christian profession, which seems to be abandon'd and disown'd by us, who instead of denominating our selves from *the Author and finisher of our Faith*, find out *new Patrons*, as if we were asham'd of our *first Relation*. Alas, how is the title of *Christian*, which was so *glorious* to the *Primitive owners*, that they gladly bought the occasion of boasting it with Torments and Death, become

become ſo *deſpicable* to *us*, that every the obſcureſt name is courted to ſupplant it! Have any of our *Idolized readers* bought their intereſt in us ſo dear as *Chriſt* has done, why then are we rather ambitious to be accounted their *dependents* than *his*? 'Tis the *Apoſtles* own argument, 1 *Cor.* 1: 13. when he refutes their factious entituling themſelves to *Paul* and *Apollo*, &c. by asking them if *Paul* were crucified for them: And indeed he there ſays ſo much upon this point, that I need only refer the Reader thither to learn, either the *unreaſonableneſs* of this Schiſmatical zeal for our ſeveral Teachers, or the *inevitable contentions* and *animoſities* which ſpring from it; only let me obſerve, that every of his Arguments are more preſſing upon *us*, than on the *Corinthians*; thoſe taken from the unreaſonableneſs ſure are, by how much the *names* we ſo adore are leſs venerable than thoſe of *Paul* and *Cephas* and *Apollo*; and thoſe from the conſequences are ſo alſo. For thoſe Teachers were induſtrious to *prevent*, whereas ours commonly are no leſs buſie to *promote contentions* on their behalf, and ſo we are more aſcertain'd never to want them.

BUT beſide this *kinder* prepoſſeſſion towards ſome mens perſons, there is another of a different nature, a *ſiniſter* one. I mean *prejudice* and *diſguſt*; and *this* has done no leſs harm in Eccleſiaſtical affairs than the *former*. Men take up *piques* and *diſpleaſures* at others, and then every *opinion* of the diſliked perſon muſt partake of his *fate*, and be engaged in the *quarrel*: Nor will thoſe that are enemies ever allow one another the honour of being in the right: Nay, ſome have been ſo perverſly *malicious*, that they have given up their *underſtandings* to their *ſpleen*, forſaken an Opinion themſelves approved, only that they might find matter of conteſt with one they maligned. A memorable inſtance of this *Socrates* gives in his *Eccl. Hiſt.* in *Theophilus*, Biſhop of *Alexandria*, who having formerly atteſted the Orthodox belief, that God was incorporeal; yet upon a ſudden indignation againſt *Dioſcorus* and his brethren, who maintained the Tenet, he embraced the contrary Hereſie of the *Anthropomorphites*, that ſo under the Colour of a difference in *faith*, he might the more advantageouſly purſue his *malice*; and the Effects of it were very Tragical, not only to *private perſons* in Tumult and Bloud-ſhed, but to the *Church* by reviving that Error, which was before near expiring, and

might as *Socrates* affirms, have lain in the duſt, had it not been thus awaken'd. And indeed in Church-ſtory ſcarce any thing occurs more frequently than examples of thoſe, who upon private grudges have either begun or fomented Hereſies and Schiſms. Thus *Marcion* being denied the Communion of the *Roman* Church, having before by a *ſcandalous crime* been cut off from his own, he reveng'd himſelf by publiſhing his *deteſtable doctrine*: In like manner *Miletius* upon a diſpleaſure at *Peter* Biſhop of *Alexandria*, firſt ſeparated from the *Church*, and after took part with the *Arians*: So alſo *Lucifer* incenſed at *Euſebius* for not approving of his Electing *Paulus* to the See of *Antioch*, broke Communion, and gave both riſe and denomination to a new *Sect*. The like is ſaid of *Apollinaris*, that he was excited to the broaching his *Hereſie* by his impatience of the Excommunication inflicted on him and his Father, by *Theodotus* Biſhop of *Laodicea*; and ſeveral others might be given to the ſame purpoſe, out of the Records of thoſe firſt Ages.

AND certainly the World ſeems not to have ſo much improved in *meekneſs* ſince, as that we ſhould think the ſame *principle* is not ſtill as *active*; and if the Task were not more envious than hard, many recent inſtances might be given to Parallel the former, eſpecially of ſuch as having juſtly ſmarted *under* the ſtroke of *Eccleſiaſtical diſcipline*, have ſought to revenge themſelves both *on it* and *the inflictors*, by Factions and Tumults; ſo making the *publick* at once cloak the Infamy, and bear the charge of their *particular* rancours. But this is a Subject neither grateful nor neceſſary to be more diſtinctly ſpoken to. One may however in the general ſay, that where theſe private Animoſities are any thing *violent*, they uſually beat down all Conſideration of *publick good*. *Hiſtorians* obſerve of *Themiſtocles*, that he always thwarted the Counſels of *Ariſtides*, not that he thought it the Intereſt of the *Common-wealth*, but *his own*, to keep down the growing reputation of his Competitor: And I fear that envious artifice has been too often tranſcrib'd, as well in *Eccleſiaſtick*, as in *Civil* Tranſactions: No *detriment* is thought ſo formidable to a malicious mind, as the *proſperity* of his Adverſary; and publick Ruptures ſhall ſtill be allowed to widen, till they ſwallow up the whole, rather than he will cloſe with his Antagoniſt.

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The Hiſtory of the *Scottiſh Church* gives an appoſite Example of this in a *ruling Presbyter*, who being by King *James* advis'd with about the readmitting Marqueſs *Huntley*, and preſt with the preſent exigencies of Church and State, which requir'd it, gave his *final anſwer* in theſe terms. *Well Sir, I ſee you reſolve to take* Huntley *in favour, if you do, I will oppoſe it, chuſe whether you will loſe him or me, for both you cannot have.* Some may think the greateſt propriety of this inſtance lies to ſhew the *inſolence* of that Tribe towards *Majeſty*; but however 'tis not impertinent to the matter in hand alſo; and ſhews how light the greateſt *publick concerns* are, when *malice* is the counterpoize: And indeed the *Naturaliſts* experiment, that *flame* will not mingle with *flame*, never juſtifies it ſelf better than when applied to minds thus accended, which however they may *meet* in mutual flaſhes, can never *unite* and *incorporate*: The ſadneſs of it is, that they ſhould only conſpire to *common vaſtation*, and make the Church it ſelf a *burnt-offering*.

THUS fatal have our ſeveral ſorts of prepoſſeſſions been to our Religion, for as if that were the *common Enemy*, our moſt diſtant contrary Affections, our *love* and our *hate* equally annoy it; thoſe brutiſh parts of us our *Paſſions*, which like the *beaſts* under the Law, were never to be brought into the *Temple*, but for *ſacrifice*, are *now* found there upon a far differing account, not to be *ſlain*, but *ador'd*; like the *Ægyptian Iſis* and *Oſyris*, enſhrin'd to receive our *Devotions*; for that the Zeal we pretend elſewhere is really paid to them, is alas, too manifeſt.

CHAP. XVII.

A Survey of the Cauſes of Diſputes; Fifthly, Zeal.

TO theſe ſeveral cauſes of our diſtractions we may add another, which though in its *original* it may ſeem more *innocent*, yet is in its *conſequents* no leſs *pernicious*, and that is a *miſtaken Zeal*; which as it is *fire* to all about it, ſo is it *wind* to it ſelf, fanns and irritates its own *flames*, and by a confidence that it does *well*, gathers ſtill freſh vigour to do *more*. How great the force of ſuch an Erroneous perſwaſion is,

we may collect from our Saviours premonition to his Disciples, when he tells them, that *those who kill'd them should think they did God service*; and if *Murder*, and that of *Apostles* too, could by the *Magick* of blind Zeal be so transform'd, we must not wonder to find other *Crimes* so too. And what *Christ* thus foretold was after eminently exemplified in *S. Paul*, whom the Holy Writ represents under all the Phrases that may denote a virulent *persecutor*, as breathing out *threatnings* and *slaughter*, making havock of the Church, and in his own words, *Persecuting that way unto the Death*, and being exceedingly mad against them; and all this he did being Zealous towards God, and out of a *perswasion* that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of *Jesus*, as we find in his *Apologie* to his countrymen and King *Agrippa*, *Acts* 22:2. and 26:9.

AND of the abettors of those Novel doctrines which after-times produced, we have reason to think many were of this Sort, especially in those Heresies, which though they carried *secret venome* in them, had yet a *plausible appearance* of Sanctity and Devotion; such was that of the *Encratites*, which seem'd to be founded in the veneration of two great Vertues *Continence* and *Temperance*, though by extending them beyond the due limits, they lost that *Sobriety* they too strictly embraced, and became *inordinate* in their Continence, and *excessive* in their Abstinence: Such again were the *Euchitæ* or *Messalians*, who made the whole business not only of *religion* but even of *life* to consist *in praying*; and though by it they evacuated all other ends of both, yet having the *letter* of a Precept, and the *pretence* of Devotion on their side, 'twas a *proper bait* for those who had *much* Zeal and *little* Knowledge. In like manner the *Novatians* Heresie had so glorious an inscription of Purity, as was very apt to attract well meaning Souls; who seeing it bid such expres *defiance to Apostasie*, could not suspect that it was it self any *defection from the faith*; and accordingly some of that Sect approved their constancy in times both of *Heathen* and *Arian* persecutions. Nor must we be so uncharitable to the modern times, as not to believe many have acted upon the like Principles, and meant truth and piety, even while they actually promoted the contrary. But how sincere soever the *purposes* of such seduced Persons were, yet 'tis evident the Church has suffered no less by *them*, than by the *more crafty designers*: their

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misguided piety has made as great and incurable Ruptures, as the most *flagitious blasphemies* of others. And when a *rent* is once made, it matters little, whether it were done by *error* or *malice*; nay, perhaps as to the hopes of repairing, the former may be the more desperate: for whereas *he* that knowingly *commits* an Ill, has the *Upbraidings* of his own Conscience towards his reducing; these on the other side have its *Cherishings* and *Encouragements*, to confirm and animate them. And doubtless they are great advantages which *Satan* has in all ages made of such Persons, whom he seems to have deluded in the same manner, that *Medea* is said to have done the daughters of *Peleas*, whom she perswaded to hack their *aged Father* in pieces, in hope that by her *Magick*, he should not only recover *life* but *youth*: so these rend and tear their *Mother* the Church, out of a hope no less delusive, of restoring her *pristine beauty* and *vigour*; how far the event parallels it also, the dying state of *Christianity* does too sadly testifie.

NOR has it only been the Heat of *Erring persons* that has been thus mischievous, but sometimes *men of right judgements* have too much contributed to the breach of Unity, and the intemperate and imprudent *zeal* of these hath serv'd to exasperate the mistaking *earnestness* of the other: this happens sometimes for want of distinguishing between the *Essentials* and *Circumstantials* of Religion, and so looking upon a mistake in the *later* with the detestation proper only to the perverting of the *former*; by this means those who have entirely embraced the same *faith*, have yet violated *charity* and broken *communion*: such slight *minute differences* when manag'd by eager Spirits being easily blown up into solemn and *lasting contentions*; so that the Disputes rais'd about some *pin* or *nail* of the Temple, have sometimes shaken and endanger'd the *whole Fabrick*, robbed the Church of that fraternal unity which was its fastest cement, and surest support. Of this we need no more apt instance from Antiquity than that which has been already mentioned upon another occasion, I mean *Victors* unbrother-like Heat towards the Eastern Churches in the *controversie* about *Easter*, which had fomented that Difference into a Schism, which the meeker Piety of his Predecessors thought no ground of *unkindness*, much less of *Separation*, as *Irenæus* more at large tells him; And probably had men in all the succeeding Ages deliberately *pois'd* the

the Errors they oppos'd, and proportion'd their Displeasure but to the *just weight* of them, many of our *disputes* would have been so calm'd, that they should never have become *quarrels*. But many in this particular have only us'd the *Touchstone*, not the *Scales*: and of Opinions that are erroneous, consider not which are more or less pernicious, but with an equal violence fly at all, as if the *Stoical* opinion concerning *Sins* had prevail'd in *Errors* also, and that all were resolv'd to be of the same size.

BUT even in those of the highest kind it may perhaps be doubted, whether *too eager an opposition* have not sometimes done *hurt*, especially in those Doctrines which relate to the *mysterious parts* of Religion, wherein a *novelty* is at first lookt upon with some horrour, and many are willing rather to *condemn* in gross than nicely to *examine*; Who yet when they find this done for them by *Orthodox persons*, they think they may with such a guide venture to wade into the question, where many times the *insinuations* of Error are so subtile, that all their *Antidotes* secure them not from *infection*, but they are themselves *captivated* where they expected only to *triumph*. Neither want there those of the *Vulgar* that are of a more *insolent temper*; and out of a vanity of making themselves *Umpires* between learned men, greedily read the writings of both Parties, who yet are able to make no *solid judgement* of either; and when 'tis remembred how many *popular artifices* there are to byasse such persons, we must confess that *Truth* hath many to one *Odds* against her: Besides, *publick arguing* oft serves not only to exasperate the *minds*, but to whet the *Wits* of *Heresticks*, and by shewing them the *weak parts* of their Doctrines, prompts them to rally all their *Sophistry* to fortifie them, that what they want of *truth* and *reason*, may be supplied with *sallacy* and little colours; and Experience shews how fitly that kind of *Logick* is accommodated to the greatest part of the World. In short, it seems not improbable, that many Heresies owe much of their *growth* to the improper means of *eradicating* them: and have acquir'd a *reputation* from the *stir* that was made about them. Thus *Socrates* tells us that *Alexanders* letters about the *Arian* Heresie serv'd to scatter that pestilent infection the more abroad, and combin'd men into parties, so that the whole *world* became the *Scene* of that long

Tragedy.

Tragedy, which possibly might have had a shorter and better *issue*, had not the notice of the Controversie been so early dispersst.

BUT if the Attempts of the *Pen* have often proved so unfit, it may be consider'd whether those of the *sword* are not more so, and *fighting* be not a worse expedient than *disputing*; and certainly we have great reason to conclude in the affirmative, if we weigh either the Injustice, or Unreasonableness of it. I know there want not those who have thought the propagating Religion by Arms not only *lawful* but *meritorious*, and that in order to the *planting* it in a Nation, the *soil* may be mellowed with the *blood* of the Inhabitants; nay, the *old* extirpated, and *new* Colonies planted. But we are to remember that as God is the *universal Monarch* of the World, so We have all the relation of *fellow-subjects* to him, and can pretend no further jurisdiction over each other, than what he has delegated to us: and sure 'twould be hard to produce any commission from him for the invading a Nation only because 'tis not of our Faith. 'tTis sure, *those* to whom he first entrusted the promulgating of the Gospel had far *different instructions*, and 'twere fit our *new Euangelists* should shew their *later authority* for this sanguinary Method; in order to which though some have made use of the *Opinion* of some Schoolmen, that *dominion is founded in Grace*, yet as that is but an Opinion, so were it admitted as the most certain Truth, it could never warrant any enterprize of this kind, for supposing that a people by wanting *spiritual* Blessings did lose all their right to *temporal*, yet that Forfeiture must devolve only to the Supreme Lord, and when as God in another case asks, where is the *bill of divorce? Esai* 50: 1. so we may demand of these zealous Invaders, where is the *bill of assignment*, by which that right was tranferr'd to them? In short, *peace* is the most valuable blessing of humane life, and we cannot without injustice deprive man of it, though we could as we pretend, give them *truth* in lieu of it; for maugre the *Proverb*, that *Exchange will still be robbery*, where the parties are compell'd to make it. But alas, 'tis a vain imagination to think that Religion can be thus impos'd: or that we can bind the *understandings* and *wills* of men, with the same fetters we do their *bodies*; 'tis true indeed the Apostle tells us *there is a way*

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of bringing every thought into Captivity to the obedience of Christ, but he tells us withal that the *weapons*, by which that Victory is atchieved, *are not Carnal*, 2 *Cor.* 10: 4. Indeed did Religion consist only in some external *conformities*, external *force* might bear some proportion to it (which perhaps is the cause that the one is most us'd by those whose Religion is most eminent for the other) but 'tis seated in those *faculties* to which *outward violence* can have no access. Alas, 'tis not whole Armies can besiege my *reason*, nor Cannons batter my *will*, 'tis *conviction* not *force*, that must induce Assent; and sure the *Logick* of a conquering Sword has no great propriety that way; *Silence* indeed it may, but *convince* it cannot: Its efficacy rather lies on the other side, breeds aversion and abhorrence of that Religion, whose first address is in bloud and rapine: Nor do such *attempts* gain any thing to the Cause but the *infamy* of those rigours which are us'd to promote it. And sure since this piece of *Mahumetan* Zeal has been transplanted into *Christendom*, it has been much more mischievous than in its native soil. Christianity having been infinitely more oppressed by those that thus fought *for* it, than those that were in Arms *against* it. Whether upon this score the *Pope* have not done her more harm than the *Turk*, I leave to consideration.

BUT what is here said of the *military* Sword, I intend not should be applied to the *Civil*; for I treat not here of those legal punishments, which *Magistrates* inflict upon their disobedient Subjects; who indeed may *justly*, nay indeed must *necessarily* require Conformity to *Ecclesiastical* laws, as well as the *Civil*: the Eruptions in the *one* commonly over-flowing the *other* also, and *Schism* usually ending in *Rebellion*; so that 'tis apparently their interest to guard themselves from those riotous effects of pretended zeal; nor is it less their duty, they being as the Ancients express it, *Custodes utriusque tabulæ*; in *S. Pauls* language, *the Ministers of God*, *Rom.* 13. and in *Constantines* dialect, Ἐπίσκοποι τῶν τὰ ἔξω, *Bishops in the whole outward administration of the Church*, and if Heresie or Schism be a *sin*, are by their places obliged to approve themselves *avengers*; to execute wrath no less there, than in other circumstances: And that they are sins and of no small bulk, none can doubt that observes *Heresie* ranked, *Gal.* 5. with *Idolatry*, *Witchcraft*, *Hatred*, *Murders*, and other sins of the flesh; or *Schism* markt out by the Apostle to the

the *Hebrews*, as a kind of *petrifying crime*, which induces that induration, to which the fearful expectation of wrath is consequent, for so we find, *Heb.* 10: 26. that *forsaking the assemblies* is lookt on as previous to *Apostasie* and final defection; And therefore sure the Magistrate can do nothing kinder, even to the Offenders, than by taking their sin early, prevent that fatal growth of it. But that his just power thus rescued, I may assume my former assertion, and conclude, that all other Violences are so far from *advancing* Christianity, that they extremely *weaken* and *disadvantage* it.

BUT of no sort is this more eminently true than of those *popular heats*, where the People undertakes to chastise *error*: for besides that the outrages then committed are very apt to avert men even from truths which they see so barbarously defended, it often happens that the *multitude* take *causeless alarms*, and think their Faith is invaded when it is not. A memorable instance of this kind *Euagrius* gives in his Eccl. History, where he tells us that the Emperor *Anastasius* having added to the *Trisagium* this Clause, *Who was crucified for our Salvation*, the whole City of *Constantinople* was in an uproar, upon an ignorant jealousie that those words had some Heretical meaning; in which fury they happening to light upon a poor silly *Monk*, they immediately kill him as the *Inventor* of that clause, and a *conspirer* against the Trinity: So unhappily absurd are the Transports of *wild zeal*, which where it rules, does besides the *direct mischiefs* of Tumult and Sedition create *others* at the rebound, which are more permanent, and discompose and embitter mens spirits, and render them so ambitiously *greedy* of *quarrels* for their Religion, that they are not only prepar'd to *receive*, but to *seek* Encounters: and 'tis too sure they can never be wanting to persons of such tempers, since the *adversaries* of Truth cannot have more *advantage* or Encouragement against it, than this *unpeaceable humour* of those that profess it.

BY these several ways has it come to pass, that even that *zeal* which should be the *life* of Christianity, is become its disease; and *Religion* like a *Hectick body* is consum'd by its own *heats*, if at least I may call those its own, which derive not from its proper and native constitution; but are the accidents of its declining state: for how confidently soever men pronounce of themselves, and believe that they are then most

pious,

pious, when they are most *eager* and *unquiet*; yet 'tis sure this is far removed from the true *genius* and temper of *religion*, which like the *God* it worships, makes its approaches, not in *winds* and *Earthquakes*, but in the *still small voice*, 1 *Kings* 19:12. And when 'tis consider'd, that the greatest part of the Euangelical Law is made up of *precepts* of Meekness, Long-suffering, and Condescension; we must conclude that *zeal* very *preposterous*, that pretends to obey by *violating* them; or to establish Religion by *undermining* the most essential parts of it: and to persons under that mistake, we may most properly apply the *reproof* given by Christ to his Disciples upon the same occasion, *You know not what manner of Spirit you are of.*

IT will therefore become men to look with *Jealousie* on themselves in this particular; not too confidently to *pursue* every Incitation which carries a shew of Piety; but soberly to *weigh* how it agrees with the rules and Oeconomy of that Gospel for which it pretends so much concern; for though the *true Christian Zeal* can never be too much cherished; yet alas, 'tis not *every warmth* we feel about Religion that can own *that Title*; and sure we do not more often, or more fatally mistake any thing than in applying that venerable *name* to things of a far *inferior*, nay sometimes of a *contrary* nature. How often upon this Error, have men ascrib'd that to their *piety* which they owed to their *complexions*, and thought 'twas their *religion* made them Earnest, when 'twas merely their *constitution*: Nay, how often has *Satan* taken this advantage of transforming himself into an *Angel of light*, and insinuating his illusions under this disguise. And truly they must still be liable to both these deceits, so long as they place the *essence* of Christian zeal in *heat* and *eagerness*. 'Tis true indeed it has its heats, but actuated in a far different way; it has flames of *Love*, not of *Anger*; to melt, not consume our Enemies; and makes us apter to pour out our *own blood* a Sacrifice to Truth than *that of gainsayers*. In short, if it be a Fire, 'tis that *pure Elemental* which the *Peripateticks* talk of, which is but of a moderate heat; apt to *cherish*, not *devour*.

AND would God men would so far believe this, as to think there may be *moderation*, without the danger of *Laodicean lukewarmness*, and upon that supposition suffer themselves to cool into a treatable Temper, and then I should humbly offer to them these few Considerations. FIRST,

FIRST, the great and universal *fallibility* of humane Nature, which renders it not only possible that we *may*, but certain that every one of us *shall* erre in something or other; and this sure is very proper to perswade lenity to those whom we find actually erring. 'Tis the *Apostles* argument in the case of Sin, *Gal.* 6:1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thy self, lest thou also be tempted.* Where the common Peccability of mankind is urged to induce Commiseration and Gentleness towards the Offenders; and if this be of force *in sin*, where the concurrence of the will renders the person more inexcusable, it will surely hold much more in *bare Error*, which being purely involuntary, (for nothing is properly Error farther than it is so) 'tis to be lookt on rather as the *disease* than *crime* of the Person: and since we use not to exclaim against men for being *sick*, but compassionately to endeavour their *recovery*, why should we here use so much a *contrary method*? 'Tis true indeed, 'tis necessary sometimes in order to the *Cure*, and sometimes for preventing the *infection* of others, to do some things *uneasie* to the Patient; and what tends regularly to either of these Ends, may in this case also be Charitably done, by those that have Authority: but *that* differs as far from our usual *severities*, as the *lancings* of a Physician do from the *wounds* of an Adversary; or *publick* Discipline from *private* Spleen. So that notwithstanding this, we may resume our *conclusion* and infer from the *Errableness* of our Nature, the *reasonableness of compassion* to the seduced. And as it thus prompts us to look *gently* upon others, so also to reflect *impartially* upon our selves; and consider how possible it is, that even whilst we condemn others, we may indeed be in the wrong, and then all the Invectives we make at their *supposed* Errors, fall back with a rebounded force upon our own *real* ones. If this possibility were but adverted to, it would make us less positive and Dogmatical in our opinions, and so consequently take away one main ground of contention: for though we often quarrel about *matters*, which are indeed but *conjectural*, yet not till we esteem them *otherwise*; and when we consider how many men have vehemently believed *apparent falsehoods*, it may well allay our *confidences* in all those cases, where we have not some *firmer ground* than our *own* (or indeed any humane) *judgement* to build on it.

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AS for those who have the *surest grounds* of Persuasion, and by their security of being themselves in the Truth, have the more *reason* to be earnest in propagating it to others: let them in the second place consider how necessary 'tis to chuse *appropriate means* to that good end, without which they do but undermine *themselves*, and defeat their own *aims*. Indeed Prudence is not only a *Moral*, but *Christian* Virtue; and such as is necessary to the constituting of all others: without it Devotion degenerates into Superstition, Liberality into Prosuseness, and this of Zeal becomes only a Pious kind of Phrensie. And of Persons so possest God may say as *Achish* did of *David*, 1 *Sam.* 21:15. *have I need of mad men?* No sure, the *defence of Truth* is too *noble a cause* to be so managed; its *Champions* are not like men in a fray to make every thing a weapon that they can first snatch up, and lay on as chance or fury guides, but are deliberately to consult the properest expedients, use not only *force* but *Stratagem* against the Enemy, and yet withal to take care that while they *oppose* one, another gain not *advantage*: For alas, 'tis indifferent to our grand *Adversary*, by which of his temptations we fall, and if by subverting the *faith* of some, he shipwrack the *charity* of others, he has his *end*, and triumphs at once both over the *speculative* and *practick* part of our Religion.

AND this may induce a farther consideration, and prompt us to examine what degree of guilt lies on those who either out of a blind, or rash zeal have given him this advantage. And here though I cannot doubt, but God makes *great allowances* to the miscarriages of *sincere intentions*, yet perhaps we have carv'd more liberally to our selves than he designs us, and presume our Security greater than in truth it is. For how innocent soever a good purpose may make our *Error*, yet 'tis a priviledge beyond all possibility of grant, that our *sins* should be so also; therefore if our Misperswasions beget wicked practice, we may be accountable for the *one*, though not for the *other*. We find indeed *S. Paul* alledges his *ignorance*, as the Cause of his finding *mercy*, for his persecuting the Church, but we are to remember what that *mercy* he there refers to is; not that of *absolution*, but *conversion*: and had he resisted the *later*, though with never so full a perswasion of his doing well in it, I much doubt whether his good meaning would have secur'd him the *former*:

former; So that all the *encouragement*, that Example can afford is, that God may probably do more for the reducing an *erring* than a *malicious* Perſecutor: And when 'tis conſidered that all the odds that Chriſt makes between him that does ill *knowingly* and *ignorantly*, is in the *number* of Stripes: we muſt reſolve our *miſtakes* are no ſuch *Amulets* as totally to ſecure us. And then whether our *guilts* ſhall not ſwell in proportion to the *ills* we do, is a queſtion that ſure can never be reſolved in the negative: for if a *good intention* cannot alter the *nature* of Sin, ſure it can as little change their *degree*, or make that of two Perſons equally miſtaken, the *Murder* of the one, ſhall not be a greater Crime than an *intemperate ſpeech* of the other. And upon this meaſure the accounts of erring zeal are like to riſe very high with many; unleſs we can think Rebellion and Bloudſhed, Sacriledge and Schiſm, with all that train of zealous Enormities to be light and trivial.

NOR will it at all legitimate *theſe*, or any *other* Crimes, though they ſhould happen to be committed in the *defence of Truth*: Of this *S. Peter* is a ready inſtance, who when to *guard* Him, who was Truth it ſelf, he had *violated* the Authority of the Magiſtrate in *wounding* an Officer; Chriſt reprehends his raſhneſs, and inſtead of applauding his *zeal*, upbraids his *abſurdity*, that could think his *mean aids* conſiderable to him, who could command *Legions of Angels* to his reſcue. And ſure he is not ſo much more impotent in his *glory*, than he was in his *exinanition*, as now to need our *Sins* to ſecure any of his *concerns*; and if *S. Peter* were thus check'd for *uſing* that Sword which he was a little before warn'd to *buy*, it muſt ſure ſet an ill Character upon thoſe *tumultuous reformations*, which have ſo much employed the *zeal* of later ages, to which there can never want a concurrence of ſeveral great *ſins*, the *guilt* whereof will ſcarce be wiped off, by their deſign'd *ſubſerviency* to Truth; what Degree of *extenuation* it may afford, is hard to pronounce, ſince we have no *rule* to meaſure it by. But whatſoever it is, we are to remember, that it can belong only to ſuch a Zeal as is *purely religious*, that mixes not with our *Paſſions* or *Intereſts*; and therefore before men be too forward to *appropriate* any Indulgence of that kind, 'twill be neceſſary to *Examine*, whether no miniſter Adherent have vitiated that *integrity* of their purpoſe, to which alone it can (even by their own award and ſentence) appertain.

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I HAVE insisted the more on *this*, because many are apt to ascribe too unlimitedly to the Force of a *good meaning*, to think that is able to bear the stress of whatsoever Commissions they shall lay on it; and by thus presuming on their *Antidote*, venture boldly on the *deadliest poisons*. To such the fore-going considerations may be useful; and by robbing them of that *imaginary* Security, help them to a *real* one, by making their good *purposes* the Director of good *actions*, not the Apology for bad. This would make Religion look consonant to it self, which now groans under the reproach of all those Ills, that are acted under its Patronage; and sure to rescue her from such a *scandal*, is but a very moderate piece of *compassion*: Yet would God she might obtain it even from *those* who profess themselves her greatest *Votaries*: But alas, 'tis one sad circumstance of her ruine, that she ows it to such; that those Weapons which should *defend* her, thus *recoil* into her Bowels, and *zeal* should do her more mischief than *prophaneness*; for while she is but scoffed at by *that*, she is wounded by *this*: nor are those *wounds* ever like to close, till our Zeal grow more *balsamick*, partake of those *healing qualities* of Love and Meekness, the Want whereof has rendred it so unhappily instrumental to our Distractions.

CHAP. XVIII.

A Survey of the Causes of Disputes; Sixthly, Idleness.

BUT as *this over-active* humour has done abundant Mischief to the Church, so it is observable, that the *direct contrary* has done as much; nay, which is yet stranger, the one is frequently the product of the other, and our too *busie zeal* springs from our too *great Idleness*. How much soever this may sound like *Paradox*, yet both *reason* and *experience* attest the Truth of it; for we are to consider that God has put an *active principle* into man, which 'tis impossible so to suppress, as that there shall be a total cessation from *motion*: And therefore every intermitting of sober, regular acting, makes way for wild Extravagant ones; for as nature is said so vehemently to abhor

abhor vacuity, that the very inanimate bodies would forſake their ſpecifick motions to prevent it: So when the *mind* is Empty, when it has no worthy and profitable *ſpeculation* to entertain it, every the moſt improper and preternatural *Object* offers it ſelf, and importunately crouds in to fill the *vacuum*. This ſeems to have been well underſtood, though ill applied by *Pharaoh*, when he thought the *Iſraelites* propoſal of Travelling into the Wilderneſs to their Devotions, was the Effect of their too great leiſure at home; and therefore encreaſes their *tasks* as the propereſt way of diverting their *deſign*: and in like manner we find thoſe that treat of *Politicks*, inſiſt upon the neceſſity of keeping the *People buſie*, in order to which it is, that they mention the uſe of *Mathematicks* and other contemplative Sciences, to entertain the *active ſpirits* of a Nation, in demonſtrating of *Problemes*, ſolving *Phænomena's*, and drawing *Schemes* and *Diagrams*, who elſe would be practiſing upon the *Government*, making new *Ideas* and Platforms for the *Common-wealth*: and doubtleſs there is parity of reaſon in the Eccleſiaſtick State, which would have been at *more peace*, had ſome men found themſelves *other diverſions*.

AND this is confirm'd to us by experiment and obſervation of Event; for if we look into the Primitive times, we ſhall find that when there was a neceſſity of defending the *common faith* againſt *Heatheniſm*, when Chriſtians were employed in writing *apologies* and *vindications*, there were much fewer of theſe *inteſtine debates* (at leaſt ſuch as were *Metaphyſical* and purely Notional) they had their hands full of the *foreign Enemy*, and had the leſs temptation to jangle among *themſelves*. So alſo when they were under the greateſt ſtorms of perſecution, when the Church was moſt violently aſſaulted from *without*, it had the greateſt Calm *within*. They were then inceſſantly employed, and buſied their Thoughts in preparing for the fiery trial. Thoſe cloudy days made them keep cloſe at home waiting for the Bridegrooms coming, and ſuffer'd them not to wander abroad for thoſe unprofitable Curioſities, which though like *Oil* they might nouriſh *flame*, yet would never furniſh their *Lamps*, or gain them admiſſion to the wedding; but in the intervals, and eſpecially after the total ceſſation of their calamity, when their Peace had taken them off their *Vigilance*, then while they ſlept, the Envious man

had advantage to sow his *Tares*. Rest made them *idle*, Idleness made them *curious*, and Curiosity *contentious*; and those who under the Tyranny of a *Nero* or *Domitian* were in perfect harmony, under the gentle pious regiment of a *Constantine*, grow to the greatest discord; and perhaps (besides the Divine and extraordinary supports the Church had in her greatest *conflicts*) this may be one of the best natural *accounts*, how she came to flourish most under her heaviest *pressures*.

BUT our observation ends not here, for besides this extraordinary importunity of thoughts, which persecuting times occasion'd, Christianity is in its frame and constitution an *active State*, has its standing business, and besides all *accidental*, a Series of *determinate*, *constant employments*, sufficient to entertain mens minds: from which we may infer, that when this is throughly adverted to, there will be few *chasms* of Time to be filled with *foreign impertinencies*. And this gives a clear account how our *divisions* have come to grow upon us, namely, by the Neglect of *practick duties*, for as every age degenerated more from *Primitive piety*, so they advanced farther in *nice enquiries* and *new opinions*; and as the zeal of *practice* grew cool, so that of *dispute* gathered heat and vigour. So that if we consider how far our *good works* fall short of the first Christians, we need not wonder to see our *controversies* so far exceed them; that Time which was gain'd from the *one*, being employed in hammering and forging the *other*. I do not forget that I have before ranked this *diversion* of Christian Practice among the *effects* of our Contentions, and foresee it may be thought very inartificial here, to make it the *cause* also: But alas, its concern in them is so extravagantly great, as to have at once the relation of Child and Parent, to be both Root and Branch, Fountain and Stream, and like a *circle* unites in *it self* Beginning and End: For as it first gave *birth* to our quarrels, so it finally receives *encrease* from them. In short, our oscitant *lazy piety* gave vacancy for them, and they will now lend none back again for more *active duty*. And as this *neglect* of our general calling of Christianity has been thus pernicious, so have the *ill effects* thereof been improved by the like ill attendance on our particular ones. We find *S. Paul* takes notice, that the *younger widows*, who deserted their own *Ecclesiastical* Office, grew *busie-bodies* in the Secular affairs of others; and sure we may with truth

invert

invert the note, and obſerve that *thoſe*, who either deſert or neglect their *Secular* Callings, are the moſt perniciouſly *medling* in Eccleſiaſtick matters. Did men conſcientiouſly employ themſelves in their *honeſt occupations*, their Minds would be ſufficiently *diverted*, and it would not become the work of Artificers to make new Schemes of Doctrines or diſcipline; Divinity would not then paſs the *Yard* and *Loom*, the *Forge* and *Anvil*, nor Preaching be taken in as an eaſier ſupplementary *Trade*, by thoſe that diſliked the *pains* of their own. But all this alas, we have ſeen to the equal ſhame and detriment of Piety. *Mechanicks* of all ſorts have preſum'd to *teach* what themſelves never *learnt*; and thoſe that ſerv'd long *Apprentiſhip* to other Crafts, have become *Divines* in a moment, and with the ſame emulous induſtry wherewith they us'd to invent new *faſhions*, have made new *Religions*. And as Idleneſs has thus made ſome *Preachers*, ſo it has made more *hearers*, thoſe who either by the *eaſineſs* of their Callings, or their ſlight managery of them, have had the moſt *vacant time*, have been the apteſt to run after *new Teachers*: Hence it is that Towns and Cities have been the great *nurſeries of Faſhion*, the *leiſure* of Shop-men making them more *inquiſitive* after, and *receptive* of Novelties. And were that *over-grown zeal* of Sermons, which has now devour'd all other parts of Religion, among that ſort of men throughly ſcanned, we ſhould find Idleneſs goes very far in its *compoſition*; for beſides that Hearing is the moſt *lazy* of all religious Offices, as appears by the *undiſturb'd ſleeps* men can take at Sermons; it is manifeſt this inſatiate appetite of it, is originally founded either in the not *having* buſineſs, or not *attending* to it. For ſhould I ask ſuch men, whether if neceſſity had enforc'd *S. Pauls* rule upon them, that without their *labour* they ſhould not *eat*, they would have ſpent their whole week at *Lectures*, and truſted to be fed by the *Ear*. I believe few could pretend to have begun with ſo exorbitant a zeal, though the truth is in the iſſue it ſometimes arrives to it; and men that have *itching ears* forget the reſt of the *body*, whilſt to gratifie them, they totally neglect all care of their *Secular concerns*, and bring Themſelves and Families to want and beggarry.

NOR is it only this *one rank* of Perſons whom Idleneſs has betrayed to faction, *Servants* we have frequently ſeen under the ſame Seducement, while either having but *little work*, or

but *little diligence* in it, they have found time to listen after *novel doctrines*, with which being once tainted, they impatiently thirst after more, and neglecting the *duties* of their place, spend their *time*, which by compact is their Masters (and can with no more justice be purloin'd from him than his goods) in following *factious Teachers*, who instruct them so in their Christian *liberty*, that they bring them to defie all *subjection*: And by telling them they are to call no man Master upon *Earth*, that they are to own no King nor Priest but *Christ*; teach them to contemn all Authority, *Domestick*, *Civil*, or *Ecclesiastick*.

IF we look farther into *families*, we shall find also that many of our She zealots become so upon the very same ground, when *women* neglect that which *S. Paul* assigns them as their proper Business, *the guiding of the house*, their Zeal is at once the *product* and *excuse* of their Idleness; and in spight of the *ill Character* the Wise man has set on her, *whose feet abide not in her house*, *Prov.* 7: 11. it becomes the *mark* of a Saint, when a Lecture or Conventicle is taken in the way: And though these feminine Irregularities may seem to be of no great concern to the publick, yet experience convinces the contrary: it having been the *unhappy priviledge* of that Sex (as ancient as their Mother *Eve*) to be able to do great and important *mischiefs*; and doubtless many *men* may give the same account of their Schism and Sedition that *Adam* did of his first sin. *The woman that thou gavest me*, &c. This has always been well understood by *Seducers*, who have found it the most compendious way to their designs, *to lead captive silly women*, and make them the *Duck-coys* to their whole Family: But even those who have miss of this influence over the *minds* of their Husbands, have yet had it over their *Purses*, and out of them supported the *Rabbies* of the Faction; who in gratitude to those wise *Abigails* give their Husbands the *title*, and perhaps wish them the fate of *Nabal*. And God knows, how many men have thus been made contributers to the *cause* they have most detested, maintain'd that *fire* which those *incendiaries* have kindled in the Holy place; *Money* being no less the *sinews* of Ecclesiastical than Secular *War*.

THUS we see how the *Idleness* even of the most inconsiderable persons has at the rebound been extremely *pernicious* to the

the Church, which like a *Clock* or *Watch* may be diſorder'd by the *ruſt* of the leaſt *Pin*; how much more then, by that of the *main Wheels* and *ſprings*? If Negligence in *lay-callings* have though but an oblique, yet ſo inauſpicious an Influence, the like Neglect in *Eccleſiaſtick* muſt needs have a worſe, becauſe more immediate and direct. And would to God we could ſay this had been wanting to the completing the miſchief: But alas, many of thoſe who are called to labour in the *Lords Vineyard*, ſeem to have forgot their Errand, and ſtand there all the day *Idle* (a much worſe ſight than to have ſeen them ſo only in the *Market-place*;) ſo that I fear there is too evident ground of ſaying, that the *ſlight execution* of the Paſtoral Office, has been *one* of the moſt eminent Contributers to our diſtractions. And among *all the parts* of that Charge, none has been more generally, or more perniciouſly neglected than that of *Catechizing*; the want whereof has left People ſo unbottom'd, that like a *houſe* built on the *ſand*, every Wind of Doctrine blows down that Faith which they only profeſt, but underſtood not. This is that which has made ſo many *unſtable Souls*, as *S. Peter* obſerves, 2 *Pet.* 2: 14. to be the proper prey of Deceivers. And God knows, we may from ſad experiment confirm the note. I wiſh the ſame *negligence* do not again evidence it ſelf by the ſame *effects*: But beſides this, which is part of the *Publick* Miniſtry, (and deſervedly is ſo, being uſeful to the whole Church, the aged as well as children) there are *private* Intercourſes between Paſtor and People which are of *great uſe*, would God they were of *equal practice*: We know a *careful* Shepherd does not only turn his *flock* into a *common Paſture*, and then think he has done his work, but does with a particular advertence obſerve the *thriving* of every one of them, takes notice of their ſingle *ſtrayings* and *diſeaſes*, and accordingly applies himſelf to reduce or cure them, and ſurely the like care is full as neceſſary in the *ſpiritual* Shepherd; 'tis not the *counſel* which is promiſcuouſly diſpenſed in a Sermon (and whereof 'tis odds every man takes that which is leaſt proper for him) that will do the *buſineſs*: Converts come not in now as in Saint *Peters* days, in throngs and ſhoals, a more diſtinct and particular application is now neceſſary; men muſt be treated with apart, their particular *wants* diſcern'd, and *applications* accordingly made of *inſtructions*, *reproof* or *comfort*, and 'tis theſe

appropriate *Medicines*, that are like to make *sound flocks*. Had Ministers generally bestowed more *pains* this way, they might probably have frustrated the *attempts* of Seducers, who could not so easily have insinuated themselves into the people, had they found them thus prepossest: but while these with all the arts of a subtile *industry* infuse their *poisons* into every one they meet, nothing but the like *diligence* in administring *Antidotes*, is like to countermine them. How much of that has been us'd I shall leave to the Consciences of concern'd persons to determine. But besides the *ill influence* the Pastors negligence has on the *People*, it has in respect of themselves an immediate propriety to the advancing our debates, the *leisure* which is thus acquir'd, being apt to betray *speculative persons*, to the study of those *curious questions*, which are the great *disturbers* of our Peace; and of those that study them, so few keep themselves in neutrality, that parties are still fomented by it: whereas were the *practical business* of their Charge throughly attended, the *remainder of time* would not be more than the *study* of the more solid, useful parts of Divinity would exact, and consequently there would no *surplus* be left for those *dangerous impertinencies*, *which*, as the Apostle says, *serve to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers*, 2 *Tim.* 2: 14. But when our Watchmen *sleep*, 'tis no marvel if they *dream* too, and entertain themselves and others with those *Phantastick notions*, which the great day will manifest to have had nothing of *weight* and *reality*, besides the Mischiefs they wrought.

AND indeed if we scan the *volumes* of those vain Speculations, we shall have cause to conclude that Idleness has *created* as well as *fomented* them; and they had as well wanted Authors as abettors, had men found themselves more useful business: and that not only the extemporary *Chimæras of Fanaticks*, but the more elaborate *niceties of the Schools*, have been thus derived: we know *Air* possesses no *place*, where it first finds not a *vacuity*, nor could those lighter *notions* have filled mens *brains*, had they found them prepossest with what was more *solid*: but when men wanted more *substantial work* for their Understandings, they were fain to employ them thus in making *Cob-webs*, of which they have made a worse sort of *Jewish* veil in the Sanctuary, and have now involved the *Gospel* in greater Obscurities, than the *Law* was before: whence our *Bezaleels* and *Aholiabs*

Aholiabs have been inſpir'd for this work I ſhall not determine; but ſure not from him whoſe Character *S. John* gives us (in peculiar reference to Goſpel-revelation) that *he is light, and in him is no darkneſs at all*, 1 Joh. 1: 5.

THUS we ſee even *Idleneſs* wants not its *operation*; but is productive of great and miſchievous *effects*; it being the unhappy *property* of that Vice, that it *ſupplants* it ſelf, and by a fatal *Antiperiſtaſis* makes men perniciouſly *active*: ſo that we may truly ſay *ſloth* has made more Buſineſs than *induſtry*. I am ſure in this inſtance it has cut out work for many ages, though of ſuch a kind, that we have little reaſon to wiſh that our *Lord* at his coming ſhould find us *ſo doing*: yet for ought now appears, our *activity* is ſo wholly bent that way, that 'tis like to be the *only*, at leaſt the moſt *intenſe buſineſs* we ſhall be found at.

I MIGHT here take a very apt occaſion to declaim againſt Idleneſs, as the unhappy fountain of ſo great miſchiefs, but that is a *vice* that has been ſo often *arraign'd*, that I need not repeat thoſe *charges* which all Authors, Natural, Moral and Divine have laid againſt it. Let but this of its being the Original of *faction* be added, and there can be nothing wanting to render it a moſt *dangerous crime*; yea, and a moſt *monſtrous* one too, that operates thus preternaturally, that *freezes* and yet *inflames* men at once, *ſtupifies* and *enrages*: And yet alas, there is as much riddle in its *fate* as its *nature*; 'tis *hated*, and yet *embraced*; generally *decried*, and yet as generally *cheriſhed*: and though it have no *advocates*, has many *friends*. Would God men would at laſt be aſhamed to *be* what they are aſham'd to *own*, and by a diligent attendance on their proper buſineſs, ſecure themſelves firſt from doing *nothing*, and then from doing *ill*; the one being ſo cloſe an Attendant on the other, that 'tis ſcarce poſſible to ſever them. And God knows the Church finds too ſad proof of their connexion: *Idleneſs* having ſerv'd as *Aſhes* to keep alive that *fire* which has ſet her in *combuſtion*. Thus unhappily *paſſive* is ſhe in our diſorders, and *acceſſary* to all our Guilts and Puniſhments: All our peccant *humours* concur to her *diſeaſe*, and like a common *mark* ſhe receives *arrows* from all Quarters, we have ſeen how many *Contributers* there are to her *ruin*, every one whereof with a wanton cruelty (like *Cæſars* murderers) are ambitious to inflict *new wounds*, and to

give her *Supernumerary deaths*; and whilſt ſhe is thus ſurrounded with *Aſſaſſines*, what can we expect, but that her preſent *languiſhings* ſhould end in *death*; that Chriſtian Religion now crumbled into ſo many *minute fractions*, ſhould like *duſt* be ſcatter'd, and irrecoverably diſſipated; ad thus infallibly it muſt be, if either *God* do not miraculouſly countermine us, and do more *for* us than we can do againſt our ſelves, or we recover ſo much ſobriety, as to forbear to *Maſſacre* what we pretend to *Love*, and endeavour to bind up thoſe *wounds*, at which our own Souls are like to *Expire*.

CHAP. XIX.

The Concluſion drawn from all the Premiſſes.

WE have hitherto examin'd the *effects* and *originals* of our contentions, and now the only remaining Enquiry is concerning the *ways* of redreſs. And that will exact no long diſquiſition. For as in *diſeaſes* 'tis ſaid, the knowing the *cauſe* is one half of the *cure*; ſo more eſpecially is it here, where the *remedies* are merely *privative*, and we are not to be healed by *external applications*, but only by *ſubſtracting* thoſe Humors which feed the Malady: There will therefore need no other *preſcription* than to adviſe the *exterminating* of all thoſe Paſſions and Intereſts which have appear'd acceſſary to our quarrels, which though they are become the publick *Epidemick diſeaſe*, yet as the *infection* did, ſo muſt the *cure* ariſe from ſingle perſons: For as we look not a *common Peſtilence* ſhould ceaſe without due care and manage both of the *ſick* and *ſound*: ſo neither can this *Church-plague* ever abate, but by the cure, or fortifying its *individual members*.

LET every man therefore who has any way made himſelf a Party to theſe conteſts, ſeriouſly interrogate his own heart; what it is that has engag'd Him in them: if any of the *ſiniſter motives* before rehearſt, let him for a while ſhift the *Scene*, and inſtead of *accuſing others* as Oppoſites to Truth, *condemn himſelf* as Enemy to Peace: remembring that how juſt or im-

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portant soever the *cause* be, it is not so to *him*; whilst he serves his humors and designs under its covert. The *Philosophers* in their darker notions of *Truth* could yet discern, that she was not accessible to *any* who sought her not purely for *her self*, with sincere and single Intentions, and if she entertain no *Pupils* that are not so qualified, is it fit she should have *Guardians* and *Champions* of a quite distant Temper? No, he that undertakes the defence of *Speculative* Verity, must first possess himself of that *practick* Truth the Psalmist speaks of, *Psal.* 51. That *in the inward parts*, such a simplicity and integrity of Purpose, as may supplant all those indirect Aims, purge out every prejudice and passion, which may byass and pervert him; and by that time he has done *this*, 'tis odds but he will find a *new face of affairs*, and discern that many of those things he so fiercely contended about, were either false or trivial; acquir'd their *considerableness* only from those *magnifying perspectives* of his own Lusts, through which he viewed them. However till he have thus denudated himself of all these *encumbrances*, he is utterly unqualified for these *Agonies*; and how lawfully soever others may strive, 'tis sure he cannot, that does it upon so unlawful grounds, and therefore upon *pain* of losing much more than a *corruptible crown* must *withdraw himself*. As for those who can yet *acquit* themselves from having fomented our Distractions, I shall not forbid them to look with great complacency upon it, but rather by considering how valuable a *piece of Innocency* it is, engage and encourage themselves to *preserve* it; and to that purpose, jealously to examine the *first overtures* of a Temptation. When they find any *proneness* to immerse in Faction, any unwonted *heat* towards a Dissenter, to trace it to its *fountain* and *original*; nicely to observe whether it issue not from some of those *envenom'd springs* fore-mentioned, and make as much hast to stop its *current*, as they would to impede the most *overwhelming inundation*; for such 'twill infallibly prove to those who indulge to its course. But as a *Turf* will at first close the *breach*, which neglected becomes the *inlet* of a mighty *Torrent*: so had this *early vigilance* been us'd, it might with ease have prevented those Distempers in *private* Breasts, from whence the *general* Confusion has sprung. As it is, might but these two things be obtain'd, would but the Guilty *purge*, and the innocent *guard*

themselves, we might yet hope to see an *end* of our Discords: not that I suppose it possible to extinguish *all diversity* of Opinions among men, who from their *differing faculties*, and other *guiltless occurrents*, may and will have their *judgements* severally dispos'd. But first, were *all*, who have upon the former culpable motives enter'd the lists, *excluded*, we should find They would amount to such a number, that there would be *few left* to maintain the Combate. Nay, secondly, were it not for those *conceal'd inducements*, there would scarce be any *Combate* to maintain, those are the things that convey the *sting* and *malignity* into our Differences, without those we might dissent, but not fall out; and should no more be angry to see another *opine contrary to us*, than we are to see him of a *different stature*, or *complexion*. In fine, let us pretend what we will, 'tis the Carnality *within*, that raises all the Combustions *without*: This is the great *wheel* to which the Clock ows its *motion*, while the *pretext* of Truth and Piety is but like the *hand*, set indeed more conspicuously, but directed wholly by the *secret movings* of the other. This, *this* alone is it which creates and continues our broils, and by a monstrous conjunction of *Properties*, is it self both *flame* and *fuel*: Nor can we doubt that from hence spring those railing accusations, we bring one against another, if we remember what *S. Jude* tells us, that the *Angel* brought them not even against the *Devil* himself, he could calmly manage a *dispute* with the most execrable and provoking *adversary*, because his *Angelick nature* had none of that *carnal leaven* which ferments to the *souring* of ours, an evident Indication what it is that has rendred our arguings so invective that *divinity* seems now an Artifice to elude *law* by daily patronizing those *Libels*, which would else be Obnoxious to *civil Justice*.

BUT I presume there need no more be said to evince this, which has, I fear, the attestation of too many consciences, to be generally doubted; the *greater difficulty* will be, to perswade the depositing of those *lusts*, which though they are confestly the *Bouteseaus* among us, have yet by I know not what Fascination so *endear'd* themselves, that we tenaciously *retain* them in spight of all their appendent Mischiefs; nay, we *cherish* and *foster* them, and for that very purpose bring them under the *covert* of Religion. He that has but a *puny vice*, if he get it like

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Joash conceal'd and shelter'd in the *Sanctuary*, 'twill not only *live*, but *raign* too; Put on a Port and Majesty, and appear venerable upon the pretence of that Piety, whose Essence and Being it evacuates and undermines.

INDEED sin never arrives at so luxuriant a *growth* as when it roots in *hallowed ground*, which *Satan* so well knows, that he has ever been industrious to *plant* it in that *soil*. Thus we find he had introduced the most *brutish crimes* into the religion of the *Gentiles*, interwoven them into their Sacred *Rites* and *Mysteries*, till virtue and vice had changed names, and it became *piety* to be Wicked, and *profaneness* to be innocent. And when that gross deceit became detected by *Gospel-light*, when he could not in the same manner obtrude upon *Christians*, he yet found the way to do it more obliquely, and by starting these religious *quarrels*, gave at once employment and reputation to the most irreligious *vices*. For alas, what part of wild *fury* was there in the Heathen *Bacchanals*, which we have not seen Equall'd if not Exceeded by some *intoxicated zealots*? Or what *cruelty* in their most barbarous *rites*, which has not been matcht by the *inhumanity* of dissenting Christians? So that upon a just scanning, all our splendid *pretence* of Sanctity is but an *emulation* of Gentile impurity under a better name; and while we damn Heathens for their *Moral virtues*, We are yet so stupid as to hope our selves to be saved by their *worst vices*.

AND now who that does enough *consider* can think he can enough *bewail* this sad state of affairs? That Christianity should thus out-run it self, and bring us round to *Gentilism* again, whilst her professors ridiculously contend for the *title* of the best Christians, by *such acts* as denominate them none at all. Thus have we inverted the *significancy* of that *Sacred Name*, and made it serve only to upbraid the *contrariety* of *our practice*; so that *that* which was once the *Index* to point out all *Moral* and *Divine virtues*, does now on the contrary mark out *that part* of the World, where *least of them* reside. This, this alone is the *prize* we have acquir'd with so much *sweat* and *bloud*, this the *Triumph* we have brought to our Religion, which indeed could never have sunk to such a *despicableness* by any Endeavours but our *own*; for so long as Christianity waged *war* only with *foreign* enemies she never mist to be *victorious*, but since that

theſe *inteſtine diſcords* have turn'd her force againſt *her ſelf*, *Bella geri placuit nullos habitura triumphos*, there is no poſſibility of ſucceſs, the mere *fight* implies a *defeat*, and the *ſwords* of all Parties meet in her *bowels*. 'Twas a paſſionate *expoſtulation* that *Julia* is ſaid to have us'd with her two ſons *Antonine* and *Geta*, whoſe animoſities having prompted them to *divide* the Empire, which they were joyntly to have *enjoyed*, ſhe askt them whether they would divide their Mother alſo; implying how much their *diſcords* had rackt and torn her. And ſure our *common Mother* may make a yet ſadder *complaint* of her Sons, by whoſe *unkind diſſentions* ſhe is ſo miſerably *mangled*, that ſhe may cry out with the *Pſalmiſt*, *My ſoul is among Lions, and I lye among the Children of men that are ſet on fire.*

AND now if amidſt all our *importunate pretences* to Piety, there be indeed any ſuch thing among us, methinks it ſhould give us ſome *relentings*, make us ſadly conſider to what a *deplorable condition* we have brought that very *religion* on which we profeſs to hang all our *hopes*; and would God thoſe who are the moſt nearly concerned in this Contemplation would purſue it to the utmoſt; let them on the one hand ſet the moſt *glittering temptations* to Diſcord, and on the other let them view the *diſmal effects* of it, and then conſider at how *dear a rate* they gratifie a few *impotent Paſſions*. Can any man without Horror think that his *thirſt* of glory has brought *diſhonour* to his Religion, and conſequently to his God; that his *curious enquiries* into things ſecret, has helpt to Evacuate the more *uſeful things* Revealed; or in ſhort, that his *purſuit* of his various *intereſts* and *appetites* has deſtroyed what was ſo incomparably more valuable, the *honour* of the Goſpel, the *unity* of the Church, and as many *ſouls* as have periſht by that ſcandal? 'Twas as infamous a Character of *inhumanity* as the very *Poets* could feign of *Diomedes*, that *he fed his horſes with mans fleſh*; but alas, that barbarity is here infinitely out-done, when men nouriſh far *worſe bruits*, their own unreaſonable *luſts*, with thoſe things that are moſt *ſacred*. Certainly were the vaſtneſs of this *guilt* throughly weighed, 'twould make men ſick of thoſe petty wretched *acqueſts* they have thus purchaſed, make them fling back this *price of bloud*, I ſay not with the ſame *deſpair*, but with as great *remorſe* and *deteſtation* as *Judas* did the *ſilver pieces* for which he ſold his Maſter. 'Tis

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sure the crimes have too great an affinity, as in all other circumstances, so especially in this, that as the one *was*, so the other *is* most frequently the Guilt of an *Apostle*, I mean of those to whom Christ has committed the dispensing of that Gospel which they thus evacuate, and doubtless this is a consideration of great enhansement, as that which superadds *treachery* to all the other pestilent *ingredients* of the Crime; 'tis the *falsifying* the most important *trust*, for under words of that signification we find the *office* of the Ministry every where represented in Scripture, as *Stewards*, *Ambassadors*, *Shepherds*, and consequently the accounts of the sin must swell so much the higher. For a Steward to *embezle* those goods he undertakes to *manage*; an Ambassador to *betray* his Prince for whom he should *negotiate*; a Shepherd to *worry* that Flock which he is set to *guard*, these are crimes that double their malignity from the quality of the Actors; and yet this is undeniably the Guilt of all *those* whose *profession* having devoted them to the *Church*, have impiously chang'd the *Scene*, and devoted the Church to *them*, serv'd all their mean degenerous ends upon her; and as *Chirurgeons* are said sometimes to deal with profitable Patients, kept open, nay, widened her *wounds* for their own *advantages*.

IT has been the *Priests Litany* as ancient as *Joels* time, *Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach*; but now alas, who shall prevail with them to do that themselves which they beg of God, to spare his people and his heritage; to prostitute them no more to their own sinister designs, nor by their vain and endless *contentions*, expose them as well to *ruine* as *contempt*. He were indeed a happy Orator that could in this effectually intercede with them, though One would think the *wonder* should lie on the other side, and the only strange thing be, that they should either *need* or *resist* such a solicitation, it being so much the concern of all that ought, as well upon the score of *advantage* as *duty*, to be dear to them; so that the *Church* may most aptly address to these her *Sons* in the same form *S. Paul* does to the *Philippians*, when he conjures them to unity, *Phil.* 2: 1. *If therefore there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil you my Joy that you be like minded.* And can it be possible for any who have tasted all or

any of these, to think fit to wrangle them away? to exchange these divine *irradiations*, the Antepast and Emblem of Heaven, for those bitter *dissentions*, whose *Alpha* and *Omega*, their *original* and *end* are Hell, and do as lively represent as they certainly lead to the horror and confusion of that land of Darkness.

BUT if some mens appetites be so depraved, that they find more Melody in *discord*, than in the *harmony* of the Angelick Quires, yet even these can discern *Musick* in a consort of *Plaudities*, and seldom miss to be affected with those *Eulogies* which are given themselves; and therefore though they disjoyn the Apostles motives, *Phil.* 4: 8. and will do nothing for virtue, yet they may be presum'd more considerate of Praise: And God knows, in a wrong sence they are too much so; and sure, as we have already observed by it, have made no small *contributions* to our *discords*: yet did they measure *Glory* by its right and proper *standard*, they would find they have all this while courted a *shadow*, and that the *substance* will never be acquir'd by being *fomenters* of publick Mischief; but the unhappiness of it is, that our *Ecclesiastick* as our *Secular* Duellists abuse themselves with false notions of Honour, novel Opinions and subtile Questions they think attest the *pregnancy* and *acuteness* of their Understandings, and give them *reputation*; but alas, how vain an imagination is this? Who admires the *Sagacity* of the Viper, that eats her way through her *mothers bowels*? Or who reverences a man for the *sharpness* of that Sword wherewith he commits his *Parricide*? Nay, what more infamous brands have Records of all ages stuck upon any, than those who were *Ingeniosissimè nequam*, *& facundi malo publico*, who us'd the best Parts to the worst Ends, and with the greatest *cunning* and *artifice* have contrived their *mischiefs*?

BUT could we abstract from these *pernicious effects*, and suppose that this *exercise* of their Faculties, were *innocent*, yet sure it would be too *light* and *impertinent* to become *matter of praise*. He that should spend all his Time in *tying* inextricable Knots, only to baffle the Industry of those that should attempt to *unloose* them, would sure be thought not much to have serv'd his generation. 'Tis one of the certainest *Estimates* we can make of a man, to measure him by the *employments* he chuses, if those be *slight* and *trifling*, they suggest the Person to have

have *low thoughts*; what an abaſement of Majeſty was it thought in *Nero* to become a *Fidler* and *Stage-player*? and *Herodian* tells us, that men hoped no longer for any thing princely from *Commodus* the Emperor, when he had once liſted himſelf among the *Fencers*, and inſtead of the magnificent *ſtyles* of his Predeceſſors, derived from the *conqueſts* of great and populous Nations, aſſumed This, *The vanquiſher of a Thouſand Gladiators*: And certainly 'tis no leſs a deſcent and diminution for thoſe who were deſign'd by God for the *higheſt atchievements*, the ſubduing the Kingdom of Satan, and pulling down his ſtrong holds, to devote themſelves to theſe ſo much *ignobler conteſts*, and account their *conqueſts*, not from the number of *Souls* won to God, but of *Oppoſers* worſted in Argument. Indeed, as we before obſerv'd, they have now rendred the *Church* a kind of *Theatre*, Diſputes are manag'd with ſuch Sleight and Sophiſtry, that at the beſt, the *Litigants* do but ſet forth a ſhew of *Fencers*: 'Twere well if they did not ſometimes play the *Gladiators*, by that wounding deadly ſharpneſs they uſe, and 'twould be conſider'd what a change is now made: In the Primitive times, none that own'd any *relation* to the Church were allowed to be *ſpectators* of thoſe Games, now That is made the *Stage*, and her ableſt Perſons the *Actors*. But certainly 'tis very little to the reputation of thoſe who have ſo unworthily debaucht both it and themſelves; and therefore to all other *diſſwaſives* we may add this of the *Uncreditableneſs*: For let men fancy what they pleaſe of the *Glory* acquir'd in theſe opportunities of ſhewing their parts, the beſt that can be ſaid of them is, that *they uſe Wit fooliſhly*. A character whereof the one part devours the other, and leaves not ſo much as a mouthful of that *popular air* which theſe *Camælions* gaſp after. In a word, though *vain glory* be a principle I ſhall commend to no man, yet in this caſe 'twere more tolerable if it would work the right way, put them upon what were really *praiſe-worthy*, and then ſure 'twould incline them rather to *cloſe* than *widen* the breaches of *Sion*. To inflict *wounds* on an unreſiſting Patient, is a thing that requires neither *courage* nor *skill*; Every man can do that who has but ill nature enough; but to *cure* them is an act at once of *Art* and *Mercy*, and entitles to the Praiſe of both: And therefore if any mans *eagerneſs* of Glory have made him over-ſee the *way*

to

to it, let him now at laſt recover his *wandrings*, and ſeek it in this one only proper *Method*.

BUT this is, I confeſs, a *Topick* of perſwaſion fitter for *Philoſophers* than *Divines*, and I wiſh I may have urg'd it impertinently; it being much leſs ſhame for *me* to have done ſo, than for *them* to need ſuch an Argument. There is another more genuine and proper, derived from the nature of *diſtributive Juſtice*, which requires a man to do his *Utmoſt* to repair the *injuries* he has done to any; this is ſo ſtated a *rule*, that all our *Caſuiſts* juſtly preſs it in all caſes of damage: But are there not many of them, who while they ſo eagerly aſſert that *obligation* in other mens caſes, do, as *David* did in the matter of the poor mans Lamb, ſeverely ſentence that *injuſtice*, whereof *themſelves* are more highly Guilty? To every ſuch I would ſpeak in the words of *Nathan*, and ſay, *Thou art the Man*. Alas, ſhall every little *triſle* I purloin from my Neighbour have *weight* enough to ſink me to the *abyſſe*? and ſhall *theſts* of the greateſt magnitude, the robbing God of his *honour*, the Church not only of her *Patrimony*, but her *Peace*, and the World of thoſe ineſtimable *benefits*, which from an uniform conſonant Chriſtianity were to have been tranſmitted to it; Shall theſe, I ſay, be ſo ſlight and inconſiderable, as not to hinder his aſcent to the hill of the Lord? Shall the leaſt *violence* I offer to the perſon of an enemy oblige me to *ſatisfaction*, and ſhall he rend and tear the *body* of his Saviour (who willingly expos'd his *natural* body only in tenderneſs to that *myſtical* one, which is thus violated) and ſhall this criminous *barbarity* exact no offers towards amends? Certainly no man can have *partiality* enough to think it, and if he do not, he is to remember *himſelf* indiſpenſibly engag'd to take the ſame *courſe* he preſcribes to *others*, and with his utmoſt *induſtry* endeavour to repair the *injury* he has done.

AND O that we might ſee this ſo eſſential a piece of *Juſtice* aſſum'd among us, that our impertinent *ſtrifes* might be ſuperſeded and all moulded into the one noble *Emulation*, who ſhall faſteſt unravel his own *miſchiefs*, and promote that *peace* he has hitherto diſturb'd. This indeed were worthy to be the united deſign of all learned men; and were it once ſo, who knows how proſperous it might be: For though ſome *ſingle attempts* have miſcarried, yet probably one great *cauſe* why they do ſo,

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was becauſe they were *ſingle*. When one Perſon comes with *pacifick arguments* to part an *enraged multitude*, let his Reaſons be never ſo convincing, they are not like to be much adverted to; the only *effect* is, that he who deſign'd himſelf the common *Friend*, is taken as the common *Enemy*; but where many aſſociate in ſuch a deſign, and make a party for peace, their *numbers* give a conſiderableneſs to their *propoſal*, and prepare for their *ſucceſs*. And were there ſuch a *combination* in order to the Churches Quiet, it were more than poſſible they might undermine the *contrary attempts* of Faction and Diſcord.

AND why ſhould not every man be *ambitious* to make one in this ſo *pious a confederacy*, and reſolve moſt ſtudiouſly to endeavour the *compoſing* the Diſtractions of the Church, in which they may borrow ſomething of *inſtruction* even from their paſt guilts, and copy out their own *induſtry* to this better purpoſe. This is ſure; our *diſputes* had never ſo multiplied, had there not been a great deal of *unhappy diligence* in nouriſhing the ſeeds of them: Every *controverted Tenet* has been heightned and improved, till it have ſpawn'd a *numerous brood*, ſo that thoſe who at firſt *differ'd*, perhaps but in ſome *few* things, wrangle on, till at laſt they *agree* in *fewer*: Now were the like Induſtry applied the *other way*, it might ſure do much to the changing the *whole Scene*. If men would as nicely obſerve the Principles of *agreement* between *diſſenting parties*, and with as much Art and Care ſeek to dilate and ſpread them; why might not they as much *overwhelm* our *Differences*, as they have been *overwhelmed* by them? 'Tis ſure that thoſe Univerſal *truths*, to which all Parties aſſent, are, as the *cleareſt* for their Evidence, ſo the moſt *important*, for their Conſequence: And why ſhould not *theſe*, if rightly managed, be a more enforcing *motive* to Unity, than the more *ſingular opinions* (perhaps fancies) of ſome men, can be to Diſcord? Certainly would but our *Moſes's* try what this *rod* of *God* in their hand could do, they would find it able to devour all *thoſe* of the *Magicians*. Would they like *Benhadads* Ambaſſadors, catch hold of every amicable *expreſſion*, any thing that looks towards *Peace*, and cloſe in with it, they might probably ſee *Effects*, beyond what can at a diſtance be expected. For ſure *Peace* is not ſuch a *dry Tree*, ſuch a ſapleſs unfertile thing,

thing, but that it might *fructifie* and *encreaſe* as well as *Diſcord*, were there a juſt care taken to cheriſh and nouriſh it.

INDEED this Deſign is only the *Amulet* which can render it ſafe to look into *controverſies*, which are elſe apt to infuſe a kind of *acrimony*, and *venome* into mens ſpirits; For we ſee many, whoſe *curioſity* at firſt brought them as unconcern'd *ſpectators*, do within a while engage with all earneſtneſs in the *conteſt*: but thoſe who ſtudy differences only with an aim of compoſing them, theſe have their thoughts determin'd and fixt, and ſo not left looſe to the enticements of any Party. *Ariſtotle* ſays that on the Hill *Olympus* the Air is ſo ſubtil and piercing, that thoſe who aſcend thither, are forced to carry with them *wet Spunges*, by that *moiſture* ſomewhat to allay that extreme *tenuity* which otherwiſe would be deadly; and ſure they that deal in *controverſies*, live in no leſs *corroſive an Air*, and therefore had need make the like proviſion, and carry with them this *Pacifick purpoſe*, as a *Lenitive* and *Emollient* againſt the infectious *ſharpneſs* they will there meet with.

AND now how bleſſed a thing were it, if we could once thus follow the things that make for Peace? that the *numberleſs mutual enmities* which are now among us, may all be reduced into *one*, that we may fight not againſt *ſingle Adverſaries*, but againſt *War* it ſelf, and contend againſt *nothing* but *contention*. And ſure our victory here were worth millions of thoſe petty conqueſts wherewith men pleaſe themſelves, and which acquire them ſo little of real advantage, that the ſame account which was given of *Otho* and *Vitellius*, that the *war* would ſwallow up the one, and the *victory* the other, is too applicable to our *combatants*, who are like to be equally unhappy in *defeat* or *ſucceſs*. The *Spartans* had an Order that when any of their *Generals* had compaſſed his Deſign by *policy* or *treaty*, he ſhould ſacrifice an *Oxe*, but when by *force* and *bloud-ſhed*, a *Cock* only: from the diſtant values of which oblations, *Plutarch* obſerves how much they preferr'd the Atchievements of calm and ſober *counſels*, before thoſe of *ſtrength* and *power*: but ſure the diſparity is more eminent in the preſent inſtance, where if we *fight* we *wound* our Brethren, but if we *unite* we *deſtroy* our Enemy; baffle and circumvent *Satans* Maſter ſtratagem, and not only *worſt* but *outwit* him. Indeed this and this only is worth our Induſtry, whereas thoſe

those *little dejents* we give each other, are like *those* in a civil War, wherein the *publick* is still sure to be a *Loser*; upon which consideration the *Romans* allowed not their Captains to triumph for such Victories; and sure our *Christianity* is very ill bestowed on us, if it have made us so much worse natur'd, as to chuse those ruinous Conquests *at home*, before the most glorious and profitable ones *abroad*.

'TWAS *Abners* admonition to *Joab*, when he was in a hot pursuit of the *Israelites*, 2 Sam. 2: 26. *Shall the sword devour for ever? knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end?* And sure 'tis more than time for our Leaders to make the same reflection, and as *Joab* did there, call back the People from following their Brethren: Nay indeed, would they but attend, they might hear themselves called back; the *great Captain* of their Salvation sounding a *retreat* from these fatal skirmishes. *Xenophon* in the institution of *Cyrus* tells us of one *Chrysanthus*, who in the heat of battel had his hand list up to strike an Enemy, but hearing in the very instant the Trumpet sound a *retreat*, *stopt* his blow. A great sobriety of *courage* so to shew more Zeal to the *obeying* his General, than the *annoying* his Enemy; and an Instance of much *reproach* to our *Spiritual Combatants*, who have shewed themselves so much worse disciplin'd, as in spight of daily repeated *calls* to Peace, still to *pursue* their Hostility: But sure such an *insolence* is so inconsistent with the *pretence* they make of fighting Gods Battels, that they must either *reform* the one, or *disclaim* the other.

AND now if after all that hath or can be said of the *obligation*, *necessity* or *advantages* of Peace, we are put to the Psalmists Complaint, *That there are still those that will make them ready to battel*: if men are of so untreatable a Temper, that nothing can be obtain'd of them; what remains for those that are Peaceable and Faithful in *Israel*, but to *bewail* those Mischiefs they cannot *redress*? If the Church must perish, at least to give her Funeral-rites, and if they cannot quench her *flames*, yet to bedew her *ashes* with their *tears*. 'Tis true, we cannot yet say she is quite *dead*; but though she *breath* yet in a few pious peaceful Souls, yet like a *Palsied person*, she scarce *moves* a Limb, she wants vigour to actuate the genera-

generality of her profeſſors, and remains rather a *trunk* than a *body*: and ſure if there be truth in that Phyſical Aphoriſm, which ſays, That *diſeaſes which croſs the temper and conſtitution of the Patient are moſt dangerous*; we may well conclude her *deſperate*, there being nothing more repugnant to the very Elements and Principles of her Being than thoſe contentions under which ſhe now *groans*.

YET there is an *omnipotent Power* to whom no Difficulties are inſuperable, an *unerring Phyſician* who makes the moſt hopeleſs Diſeaſes, but the Triumph of his Art. O let us reſort to him, and invite his Aids in the ſame pathetick form, wherewith he was ſolicited for *Lazarus*, *John* 11:3. *Lord, behold ſhe whom thou loveſt is ſick*: She for whoſe ſake thou endureſt ſuch contradiction of *ſinners* againſt thy ſelf, is now by the contradiction of her own *Children*, languiſhing and expiring, ſhe for whom thou pouredſt out *thy bloud*, lies weltring in her *own*; Lord, ſave or ſhe periſheth: Were ſuch Petitions enforced and ingeminated by the daily breathings of humble devout hearts, who knows how prevalent they might be? In this ſenſe alſo *Heaven* might ſuffer *violence*; nor is there any better countermine to all the *outrages* acted upon Earth than by making them thus reverberate in our *cries* and *prayers*.

AND perhaps *this* Conſideration will draw us all, even the moſt *peaceful* of us into the *guilt* of a negative Acceſſarineſs to the preſent Miſchiefs. There are divers that diſlike our *contentions*, and blame the *abettors*; but yet with ſuch Unconcern'dneſs and Indifferency, as that wherewith we commonly talk of the *combuſtions* of foreign States, wherein we rather expreſs our *Judgement* than our *reſentments*, and do make it more our *diſcourſe* than our *concern*. And even of thoſe who have in ſome degree laid it to heart, who is there that has not been ſome way wanting in the ardency, or frequency of his interceſſions? Let every one ſeriouſly interrogate his own Heart, and I fear 'twil witneſs to him, that his own *private concerns* are much apter to excite his *devotion*. Let us remember with what *paſſion* and *importunity* we invoke God in our particular Exigents, and conſider whether *we* are equally affected with *thoſe* of the Church: Haſt thou been like *Hezekiah*, ſick unto death? And haſt thou with him wept ſore,

and

and vehemently solicited a recovery? Has thy *estate* been invaded by Oppression, thy *fame* by Slander and Detraction? And hast thou with loud and earnest cries, appealed to that *God to whom vengeance belongs?* Or hast thou been in that condition which is proverbial for setting men to their prayers? Hast thou like *Jonas* been in a storm, in minutely expectation of being swallowed up by the *waves*, if not the *Whale*; and in this Ecstasie of fear, when as *thy soul was*, as the Psalmist speaks, *even melted away because of the Trouble*, hast cried unto the Lord, and even out-nois'd the billows in thy clamorous importunities for aid? Hast thou in all, or any of these estates been thus affected for thy self? Then remember whether thy *resentments* have been proportionable for *that* which is much better than thy self: If the no less imminent and pressing *dangers* of the Church, have not as much awakened thy *fervor*, given as sharp and piercing an *accent* to thy Prayers, thou must needs confess, thou hast fall'n short of what thou shouldest and mightest have done towards her rescue.

AND if this Inquisition be *impartially* made, who among us can plead *not guilty?* And therefore in reflections upon our past omissions, we are *in justice* oblig'd to redouble our *Zeal*, to say over again our *Tepid heartless prayers*, and inflame them with a *Coal* from the Altar; an earnest affectionate Concern for all that is holy, such as may prompt us to cry, and that mightily to God: We see the *Ninevites* could do it when there was no visible approach of *danger*, but merely upon the *presage* of a stranger Prophet, backt with the *consciousness* of their own Guilt: I fear we more than equal them in the *latter* Motive, I am sure we far exceed them as to the *former*. The *miseries* we are to deprecate being not only under denunciation and threat, but actually upon us, though withal so improveable, that after all the *black Catalogue* our Experience brings in, our Fears meet us with the *bottomless Prophetick menace*, Esay 5: 25. *For all this his Anger is not turn'd away, but his hand is stretched out still.* 'Tis the usual Oeconomy of divine Justice to make our *Crimes* our *Punishment*, and to give us up to *those ills*, which were at first, our own *depraved choice*: and God knows we have too much reason to fear this may be our case: That we who have so perversly violated all the *bands* of Unity, wantonly wrangled our selves out of all *inclinations* to Peace, should never be able

to

to reſume them; that all theſe *gentle breathings* of Grace, by which *exaſperated Paſſions* are to be cool'd and tempered, ſhould be withdrawn, and we finally be given up to be diſſipated by thoſe Whirl-winds our ſelves have rais'd: That *Chriſtianity* which we have made the ſtale and Property to our irregular *appetites*, us'd only as *fig-leaves* to hide our *ſhame*, ſhould wither and ſhrink into nothing: and that *we* who could not agree in what manner to *retain* it, ſhould at laſt too well agree to *renounce* it.

THIS alas, as it is the *fearfulleſt*, ſo is it the *probableſt* Iſſue of our wild Contentions, ſuch as nothing but the miraculous Effluxes of divine *Clemency* can avert. O let us with all the *groans* and *tears*, ſo deplor'd a Condition exacts, addreſs thither, importune the *Father of Mercies* to pity *us*, who know not how to pity *our ſelves*, and that though we have caſt off *all bowels*, yet that we may find them all concenter'd *in him*: that he will heal our *wounds*; and which of all others is the moſt deſperate, our *unwillingneſs* to be healed: that the *Spirit of Peace* may over-ſhadow us, and impreſs on us the *dove-like qualities* of Meekneſs and Gentleneſs: that he would reſcue our Religion from our Profanation, not by taking *it* from Us, but by conforming *us* to It: Finally that he would do for us, not only above what we can *ask* or *think*, but beyond what we would *wiſh* or *chuſe*, and not ſuffer us to *acquire* the Miſeries we ſo eagerly *purſue*.

THIS *divine interpoſition* alone is it that can poſſibly ſecure us, and indeed the ſuit amounts to no leſs, than that he will *force* upon us the Bleſſing we *reſiſt*, and do us good againſt our wills, which is ſo bold a *requeſt*, that they had need be more than ordinary Favourities that ſhall prefer it. Thoſe *hands* muſt be very pure, that are lift up in ſuch an *interceſſion*: and therefore all that undertake it are obliged to qualifie themſelves for it, by purging out not only the *leven* of Malice and Strife, but all other *filthineſs* of the Fleſh and Spirit: without This, we can never approve our ſelves to intercede in earneſt; for what can be more ridiculous than to deprecate the *ruine* of Chriſtianity by the *contentions* of other men; when our ſelves contrive it by ſome other vice of our own? This is not to deſire it ſhould *live*, but that none but we ſhould *kill* it. 'Twill therefore concern thoſe who wiſh the *Peace* of the Church,

to

to examine whether they do as much project for her *Purity*; otherwiſe 'tis a mockery to pretend ſuch a *jealous tenderneſs* for her. We have ſeen there are more ways than one, by which Chriſtian practice may be evacuated, and it matters little from whence that Wind blows that ſhipwracks our Piety. Yet 'tis not to be denied that of all thoſe *tempeſtuous blaſts*, this of our *contentions* is the roughest and moſt fatal. 'Tis indeed not a ſingle guſt, but an encounter and ſtrugling of ſeveral contrary winds; and God knows no *poetical deſcription* can out-do the *horror* of the ſtorms they have rais'd; yet for ought I diſcern, there is nothing that is leſs vulgarly accuſed, which I muſt account to the Reader, as the *cauſe* why I have detain'd him ſo long upon this Head; and given it a *length* ſo unproportionable to the *preceding* parts of this Diſcourſe.

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

The Close.

WE *have now seen the unhappy riddle of the* Unchristianness *of Christians unfolded, have observ'd the* Originals *and* Causes *of That which is too notorious to all the world in its* Effects. *And though in this cursory view the* Reader *is not to think he has any such* complete discovery, *as should supersede his own* farther inquisition, *yet as it may serve to* awaken, *so somewhat to* assist *his Industry, give him some light and insight into the wiles of Satan: and by branding some of the chief of those* cheats *which have robb'd us of our* Piety, *prepare for the detection of the* whole Confederacy: *in the interim this* Specimen *may serve to stop his wonder at the* ruinous estate *of Christianity, for though 'tis true that it was compacted of all the most* incorruptible materials, *had all the* harmony *of parts which the most exact* Frame *and* Composure *could give it, and so was qualified both for* strength *and* beauty, *to have defied all the* injuries *of Time; yet while he has so many* Underminers, *'tis not strange to see her in the* dust, *there being no* one *of these, especially that I last insisted on, which has not destructive* efficacy *enough, first to* deface, *and then to* ruine *her.*

BUT it is but an unprofitable acquest to know the Authors *of our mischiefs if we stop there, this enquiry being matter not of mere* Curiosity, *but of the nearest and most pressing* Interest: *we search not after Malefactors for their* acquaintance, *but for their* punishment, *and our own* security; *and all our discoveries of this kind are vain, if we apply them not to that purpose. Let me therefore conclude with this* earnest Petition *to the Reader, That he will not to all the* native *Defects of this* discourse, *add this* accidental *one, that it shall be perfectly* impertinent; *a mere waste of his Time and my own;*

own; which it will inevitably prove, *if it engage him not in an* earnest prosecution *of those* Delinquents *it hath impeacht; and in as earnest an endeavour to repair the* Miſchiefs *they have wrought.*

IN short, let every man depoſit what he has here read, not with his memory *only, but his* conſcience, *let him there ſeriouſly ponder the Excellency of that* holy vocation, *as* S. Paul *terms it,* Eph. 4: 1. to which he is call'd: *and then as ſeriouſly conſider,* whether he have, *as the Apoſtle there exhorts,* walked worthy of it; *if he find he have not (as alas, who is there that has?) Let him ſearch out as the* particulars, *ſo the* cauſes *of his Miſcarriages: diligently ſift out thoſe Fallacies of* Satan, *or his own* heart; *thoſe ſly Deluſions which have made him act thus prepoſterouſly againſt all the Convictions of common* reaſon, *natural* conſcience, *or Chriſtian* experience; *and when he has diſcovered, let him make no delay to reſcue himſelf from their* Treacheries, *but manfully break thoſe* withs *and* cords *(which are too weak to hold any that will but in earneſt remember, he is a* Nazarite, *a Perſon conſecrate to God) reſolutely reſiſt the* inſidious careſſes *of thoſe* Dalilahs *which will deliver not* Himſelf *only, but the* Ark *to the* Philiſtines. *Nor is he to content himſelf with his own* ſingle eſcape, *but to propagate the* deliverance *to as many as he can; let him blazon and ſtigmatize thoſe* Impoſtors *(for 'tis a* combining *with them to* conceal *them) warn and caution* others *againſt thoſe jugling Artifices, by which* himſelf *was entrapped, and make his own ſhip-wracks a* Sea-mark *for the ſecuring the courſe of other Paſſengers. This is the* Effect *of Chriſts admonition to* S. Peter, When thou art converted ſtrengthen thy brethren; *and a piece of that Fraternal charity we all ow to every particular Soul, to whom we have opportunity to diſpence it.*

BUT beſides that private *Obligation, it becomes a duty upon a higher, and more* publick *account, it being the only way to take off that* Scandal *we have brought upon our* Religion; *which as it was not contracted by the* irregularities *of*

one or two persons, but by associated and common crimes; *so neither will it be removed by a few single, and private* Reformations; *there must be combinations, and publick* Confederacies *in* Vertue, *to balance and counterpoise those of* Vice, *or She will never recover that pristine honour which She acquired by the general Piety of her Professors. In those primitive days there was such an abhorrence of all that was Ill, that a* vicious person *was lookt on as a kind of* Monster *or* Prodigy, *and like a putrified Member cut off, as being not only* dangerous, *but* noisome *to the Body: but alas, the Scene is so chang'd, that the* Church *is now made up of* such *as She would then have* cast out; *and 'tis now as remarkable an Occurrent to find a* good *Christian, as it was there to see a* bad: *and since every thing is estimated not according to its rare and casual, but frequent usual Operations, 'tis easie to conclude, that* Christianity *has lost as much in its* Repute, *as it appears to have done in its* Efficacy: *nor will there be any way of repairing it, till We be generally rendred so malleable to its* impressions, *that our Lives may attest its* Force *and* Energy.

NAY indeed 'tis not only its honour, *but its* being *is concern'd in it, active Principles cease to* be *when they cease to* act. *You cannot hinder the fire to burn but by putting it out: and to* suppress *the Operation of our Religion is indeed to* extinguish *it; at least to deprive it of its proper and specifick act: so that if it can be said to be; 'tis only by that abuse of speech which calls a dead or painted man, a Man: It may perhaps be a* vizor *for the Hypocrite, a* Stale *for the Ambitious, a* wash *or* tincture *for the Covetous; but where it is* these, *it ceases to be* it self. *The* essence *and* being *of Christianity is* practice; *and according to that Test and proof thereof, where almost can it be said to Exist in the world? We have indeed some images and Shadows of it: Some have taken its* picture, *but the* substance *and* solid body *is vanished, resolv'd into Air, and seems sadly to have moraliz'd the poetick Fable of* Sibylls *being worn into a voice,* we have turn'd it into

into a mere noise and sound; *nay, which is worse, into an* Echo, *that flattering complying voice, which reverberates every mans own language to him: Men dictate to their* Religion, *and then will needs perswade themselves and others, that their Religion dictates to* them, *will have the* rebounds *of their own Fancy or Lust pass for Divine* Oracles; *so suborning this Aiery fantastick Christianity to legitimate those practices, which the real solid one forbids and execrates.*

TO this dismal forlorn estate have we brought that which was design'd to bring us to bliss, herein far exceeding the barbarity of the brutish Sodomites, *they would have violated the Messengers of their* ruine, *but we those of our* safety: *We having not only neglected, but vilified and reproacht the* Embassie *sent us from* Heaven, *and instead of* embracing *that purity and peace it recommended to us, have done our Parts to make it* forgotten *that ever it was sent upon any such Errand; and indeed so it is like to be, if some* Heroick piety *do not revive its* Memory, *and teach us to record it not so much in our* books *as* lives: *There, and there only it will universally legible, there it would indeed appear, what it is in its own nature,* the power of God unto Salvation.

AND now why should we not all Emulously contend, who shall first put off that ugly vizor *we have put upon our Religion, and restore it to its* native form? *especially considering that with its* Beauty *we lose its* Dowry *too; forfeit all those glorious* Rewards *which it promises to them that preserve it* immaculate. *'Tis only a* pure *and* undefiled Religion *that will invest us in those* white robes, *wherein we are to follow the* Lamb. *And sure those who have here endeavoured to* darken *and* extinguish *all the rays of Spiritual Light, that have lived as if they profest Christianity merely in spight to* defame *it, must never hope it shall bring them to* shine as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father, *or procure them the* reward *of blameless Souls. No, it promises no other* Crown *than that of* Righteousnes, *and therefore they that want the* Righteousnes *must want the* Crown *also; Nay, besides*

that so inestimable a Reversion, they lose all those present Joys *and* satisfactions *which true Christian practice would afford them, and which both in respect of the* intenseness *and* duration, *infinitely exceed the most* profuse sensualities *the World ever tasted.*

THESE are interests that are sure Important enough, and yet we must be wooed *to consider them, nay, that does not prevail neither, but with a perverse Coyness we* hold off; *all the solicitations and importunate* Calls *of God are lookt upon as* Artifices *and* Designs, *as if he had some Ends of his own to serve upon us, and (as the* Corinthians *suspected* S. Paul) *meant to make a gain of us; we treat with him as if he were the Person to be advantaged, and barter for* Heaven *with such an Indifference, as if* It *would want Us more than* We *It; never considering that 'tis impossible for him to have any other* Concern, *than that which his* Compassion *to us creates, and the more* earnest *and* passionate *That is, the more it should excite our own* care, *it being the Extremest degree of perverse Folly, to* abandon *and* despise *our own Interest merely because a Friend or Patron* considers *and* prizes *it. And this* brand *must lye upon every one of us, who still refuse to discern* the things that belong to our Peace, *after God has done so much to render them not only* visible *but* attainable.

WHAT shall I say more, but conclude with Christs passionate wish, *that* we might in this our day, understand the things that belong to our Peace, *and O that the* Spirit *of Peace and Light would descend among us, illuminate us with that true* practical Wisdom, *which may convince us, that our* Duty *and* Interest *are the same thing under several forms, and that while we impiously cast off the* one, *we do as foolishly betray the* other. *That so those* inestimable advantages *our Christianity gives towards both, may not be thus madly lost, serve only* as a price in the hand of a Fool, who hath no heart to it, *Prov.* 17. *And to this end let us humbly and earnestly invoke the Father of lights, to* illuminate

nate *all those whom the God of this world hath* blinded, *that after he hath sent into the world the* Image *of his own eternal brightness, caused the* Sun of Righteousness *so long to shine upon us, it may not serve only to involve us in that most* dreadful condemnation, *which awaits those who love* darkness *more than* light; *but that answering the purpose of our* holy calling, *walking as* Children of light, *we may vindicate that* Christian profession *which we have so defamed, secure to our selves the light of* Gods countenance *here, and that of his* glory *hereafter.*

FINIS.

PRIVATE DEVOTIONS,

REFERRING

To the ſeveral parts of the before-going Treatiſe.

TO THE READER.

IT is to be hoped that as this Treatiſe entertain'd many; it has alſo had an effect much more deſirable, though leſs comprehenſive, to mend and convince ſome. And whilſt it gave an account of the general DECAY OF CHRISTIAN PIETY *in the* Preſent *Age; has alſo invited a few at leaſt, to its purſuit and ſervice. Upon theſe hopes the* Author *has been perſwaded to add this* Specimen *of* PRIVATE DEVOTIONS, *that if the ſober and conſidering Reader ſhall at any time find his heart toucht and ſoftned, he may have inreadineſs wherewith to actuate his holy flames, and aſſiſt him in his addreſſes to the Throne of Grace.*

PRIVATE DEVOTIONS,

Referring to the ſeveral parts of the before-going Treatiſe.

O BLESSED Lord, who art infinitely holy and happy in thy ſelf, and from whom alone we derive the poſſibilities of being either; we proſtrate our ſelves before thee, in an humble adoration of thy abundant goodneſs, and a juſt confuſion at our own deteſtible ingratitude: we were aliens and enemies to thee by our corrupt affections, and ungodly works, yet even to us, haſt thou been reconciled, nay bought the attonement with the precious bloud of thy dear Son: thou haſt ſent him to be the propitiation for our ſins, and (which is no leſs mercy) to be the ſubduer of them too, ſenteſt him by his divine Example and admirable Precepts, to bleſs us in turning every one of us from his iniquities. Thou haſt given us a Law ſo perfect, ſo excellent, as renders our obediences their own reward, and yet ſuperaddeſt alſo an eternal weight of glory to be its future retribution: and leſt our brutil temper ſhould not be attracted by all this, thou haſt hedg'd up our way with thorns, annext a preſent uneaſineſs, and ſubſequent danger to our deviations, ſo by the menaces of Hell eſſaying to fright us into Heaven: and to actuate and enliven all theſe methods, thou addeſt the internal aſſiſtances of thy Grace and Spirit to excite us to good, to reſtrain and avert us from ill, and finally advance us to the meaſure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt. And now, O Lord, after al theſe obligations, all theſe aids, what manner of perſons ought we to be, in all holy converſation and godlineſs? But alas, to our eternal reproach, we have ſignaliz'd our ſelves by

contrary practice; blaſphem'd that holy Name whereby we are call'd, and by our enormous lives, ſcandaliz'd our profeſſion, and made it as eminent for vice, as it ſhould have been (and once was) for virtue. Our knowledge of thy will ſerves only to inform us, wherein we may moſt oppoſe it; and while we call our ſelves Chriſtians, we commit ſuch things as are not ſo much as named among the Gentiles. Nay, O Lord, ſo little do we retain of the power of Godlineſs, that the greateſt part of Men have now caſt off the very form, deny the Lord that bought them, trample upon all that is ſacred; and not only think but loudly ſay there is no God. Thus inſtead of regulating our manners by our faith, we model our faith by our manners, and reap nothing by our Chriſtianity, but the guilt of Apoſtaſie, and the fearful expectation of that fiery indignation which awaits thoſe who have thus trampled under foot the Son of God, and done deſpight to the Spirit of Grace. And now, O Lord, when the foundations are caſt down, what can the righteous do? What counterpoiſe can the groans and tears of thoſe few who mourn in *Sion* be to ſuch general, ſuch daring impieties? Yet, O God, thou haſt in all ages ſtrangely condeſcended to the interceſſion of thy Servants. O bow thy Heaven again and come down, and hear the prayers of thoſe who deſire to fear thy name, and let them not only deliver their own Souls, but obtain mercy for this perverſe generation, even ſuch a mighty grace as may yet reduce us. O thou who didſt at firſt call us out of Darkneſs into thy marvellous light, recal us now from that worſe darkneſs, wherin we have involved our ſelves, put thy Laws a new in our hearts, and write them in our minds: And after ſo many Years, ſo many Ages of being call'd Chriſtians, let us at laſt begin to be ſo. Revive, O Lord, that Primitive zeal and ſanctity, which may purifie us to thy ſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works. And O thou bleſſed Mediator, who prayedſt for thy firſt crucifiers, intercede alſo for us, who have under the name of Diſciples crucified thee afreſh: and though we have nothing to ſay for our ſelves, cannot pretend that we knew not what we did; yet let thy ſtripes and wounds, thy croſs and paſſion plead for us. Thou didſt once lead captive, O ſtir up thy ſtrength

again,

again, and let not Satan now triumph in thy ſpoils, and deſecrate thy Church which thou haſt purchaſed with thine own bloud. O let thy bleſſed Spirit breath again upon us, that even theſe dry bones may live in thy ſight: let him ſo effectually convince and reprove, illuminate and excite us, that we may cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of fleſh and ſpirit, walk worthy of that holy vocation wherewith we are called, and be capable of thoſe glorious rewards which are prepar'd for thoſe who fight a good fight, finiſh their courſe, and keep the Faith: where we ſhall ceaſe to grieve, to ſuffer, and to ſin; but never ceaſe to live and to be happy: ſinging perpetual *Hallelujahs* to him that ſits upon the Throne, to the holy Spirit, and to the Lamb for evermore. *Amen.*

A LITANY.

O GOD the Father of Heaven, the God of Angels and of Men, the Father of compaſſions, of conſolation and life;

Have mercy upon us miſerable ſinners.

O God the Son, the Eternal well-beloved Son, by whom the ſinful race of Men become the Sons of God;

Have mercy upon us, &c.

O God the Holy Ghoſt, the Spirit of comfort, of holineſs and grace, by whom we receive the Adoption, and the earneſt of our hope;

Have mercy upon us, &c.

O Holy, Bleſſed and Glorious Trinity, diſtinguiſht as in Perſon, ſo in the various diſpenſations of the work of our Redemption; united as in Eſſence, ſo in the acts of kindneſs and compaſſion to Men;

Have mercy upon us, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to create in us clean hearts, and to renew a right ſpirit within us, to reſcue us from all the deceits of the World, the Devil and our own Hearts.

We beſeech thee to hear us good Lord.

That it may pleaſe thee to grant that all who have been baptiz'd into Chriſt, may indeed put on Chriſt; ſeriouſly weigh and induſtriouſly anſwer the obligation of their holy calling; not reſt in the form and outſide of Religion, whilſt by a retchleſs inconſideration they enervate the power and efficacy thereof.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee ſo to guide our conſideration, that we do not thereby ſo enſnare our ſelves, entertain thoſe deluſions which flatter us with hopes of reward, without performing duty; but that by an impartial advertency to all thy Sacred dictates, we may be engag'd to a conſtant, entire obedience, and work out our ſalvation with fear and trembling.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That

That it may pleaſe thee to open our Eyes that we may ſee the wondrous things of thy Law, to convince us that it is holy, juſt and good, ſweeter than hony and the hony-comb, and that all our objections to it ariſe only from our being carnal and ſold under ſin.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to remove all our carnal prejudices, and vicious prepoſſeſſions; and to enable ut to meaſure thy precepts by the rules of right reaſon, and an illuminated conſcience, according to the analogy of thy holy faith once delivered to the Saints.

We beſeech thee, &c,

That it may pleaſe thee to inſpirit us by thy grace, that we may not only approve, but obey thy commands, conquer all the diſcouragements of ſloth or vice, and chearfully ſet to the practice of Chriſtian duty, that ſo we may experimentally find how ſweet the Lord is.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to put thy fear in our hearts, that we may never depart from thee, but equally obey thee in all things, not indulging to any favourite ſin, but entirely reſign and captivate every thought to the obedience of Chriſt.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to take theſe ſtony hearts out of us, and to give us hearts of Fleſh; ſuch as may melt at the apprehenſion of our ſins and thy diſpleaſure.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to endue us with a right Judgement, that we deceive not our ſelves with ſhews and formalities of repentance; but bring forth indeed fruits meet for it.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to awake us from our ſupine and dangerous dependence on a future repentance, and make us in

this our day diſcern and embrace the things belonging to our Peace, ſo anſwering thy preſent calls, that we may not at laſt call when thou ſhalt only laugh at our calamity, and mock when our fear cometh.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to poſſeſs our Souls with a juſt reverence, and right apprehenſions of thy eſſence and attributes, that we may not form our belief of thee by our own fancies or wiſhes, but by thoſe revelations thou haſt given of thy ſelf in thy word,

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to reſtrain our bold Curioſity in prying into thy counſels and decrees, and make us wiſe unto Sobriety, reſerving ſecret things unto the Lord our God, and ſtudying the revealed ones for the regulating of our lives.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to give us ſuch an aw of thy juſtice, that we may fear to provoke it, not expecting thou ſhouldſt repent of thy judgements, when we do not of our ſins, nor fancying that any milder vengeance attends our final obſtinacy than unquenchable fire.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to grant us ſuch a ſenſe of thy mercy, that we may never ſay there is no hope, or excuſe our incorrigibleneſs by our deſperation, but that the goodneſs of God may lead us to repentance, yet let us never ſo preſume on it, as to ſin that Grace may abound.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to enable us with all due regard to obſerve, and humility to adore, the diſpenſations of thy Providence, not pretending to fathom thy ſecret intendments, but endeavouring ſo to comply with all ſignal diſcoveries of thy purpoſes towards us, that what thou deſigneſt for our wealth, may not be to us an occaſion of falling.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That

That it may pleaſe thee, that from every event, whether National or Perſonal, we may ſtill infer the obligation and neceſſity of turning from our ſins; that gratitude for paſt mercies may allure us to good, and fear of impending Judgements may drive us from evil.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to inſpire the univerſal Church with the Spirit of Truth, Unity and Concord, that there may be no diviſions among us; but that we may be perfectly joyn'd together, in the ſame mind, and in the ſame judgement.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee, wherein ſoever any are contrary minded, to reveal thy truth to them; and in the interim ſo to allay thoſe heats our differences have caus'd, that amidſt the diverſities of judgement, we may keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to deliver us from all the unhappy effects of our contentions, and to purge us from all the criminous cauſes of them, and ſo to heal our breaches, that *Jeruſalem* may again become a City at unity in it ſelf.

We beſeech thee, &c.

That it may pleaſe thee to grant that we no longer dote about queſtions, and ſtriſes of words whereof cometh Envy, Railing, evil Surmiſes; but ſo buſie our ſelves in practick duties, that we may not fear when our Lord comes to be found ſo doing.

We beſeech thee, &c.

Son of God we beſeech thee to hear us.

O Lamb of God that takeſt away the ſins of the world;
Grant us thy Peace.

O Lamb of God that takeſt away the ſins of the world;
Have mercy upon us.

O Chriſt hear us.

Lord

Lord have mercy upon us.
Christ have mercy upon us.
Lord have mercy upon us.

OUR *Father which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name*, &c.

O Lord deal not with us after our Sins.
Neither reward us after our Iniquities.

ALmighty God, who sheweſt to them that be in Error the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return to the way of righteouſneſs: Grant unto all them that be admitted to the fellowſhip of Chriſts Religion, that they may eſchew thoſe things which be contrary to their profeſſion, and follow all ſuch things as are agreeable to the ſame, through *Jeſus* Chriſt our Lord.

O Merciful Saviour, who ſo lovedſt thy Church, as to give thy ſelf for her, look again on her with thy compaſſionate eyes, who now needs a ſecond redemption, even a reſcue from her ſelf, from the unnatural iſſue of her own bowels. Lord thou ſeeſt the miſerable ſtate to which ſhe is reduced, by our wild contentions, that ſhe has at once loſt her purity, and her peace, and is become an *Aceldama*, a field of bloud. Lord where is thy pity and the ſounding of thy bowels towards her, are they reſtrained? O remember thy old loving kindneſs, the love of thy eſpouſals, and as thou wert once a Lamb to expiate her guilts, ſo be thou now a Lion to vindicate her wrongs; ſtrike a dread into the hearts of all, who have contributed to her ruine, and make them know that whoſo touches her, toucheth the apple of thine Eye. O let not her ſtill ſink under the oppreſſion of our ſordid deſigns, and irregular appetites, nor be devoured by thoſe who pretend to guard her. Give her Paſtors after thine own heart; let her Prieſts be cloath'd with righteouſneſs, and waſh their hands in innocence before they compaſs thine Altar. O let not any vain ambition for themſelves, make them expoſe and proſtitute the honour of their God: no affectation of that knowledge which puffeth up, divert them from that Charity which only edifieth: Grant that the intereſt

of

of Religion may ſtill be uppermoſt in their hearts, and never vail to Secular ends, nor the pretence of truth cloak any exorbitant paſſion. Nay, O Lord, refine even their Zeal, and make it ſerve to kindle, not conſume their Charity: and to inſpirit them with ſuch an unwearied induſtry, that they may always abound in the work of the Lord, diligently take heed to thoſe flocks, over whom the Holy Ghoſt has made them overſeers, never turning aſide to vain jangling, or ſtriving about words to no profit. And to all who are under their charge, give meekneſs to ſubmit to thoſe who by thy appointment watch their Souls; ſuppreſs all prejudices and faction, and let none be puffed up for one againſt another but grant that by a due attendance on their callings, both as men and Chriſtians they may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godlineſs and honeſty. And, Lord, let both Prieſt and People ſo follow after the things that make for peace, that we may adorn the Doctrine of our God and Saviour, take off the Scandal our diviſions have given to thoſe that are without, and again evidence our relation to the Prince of Peace: and O that our ways were made thus direct, but alas, how little diſpoſition have we towards it? This change muſt be only the work of that mighty power, which is able to ſubdue all things to it ſelf: and yet, O Lord, with what face can we beg of thee to force us to that happineſs, which we ſtill reſolve to reſiſt? What can we then ſay unto thee, O thou Preſerver, thou Redeemer of men, who have put our ſelves beyond all the ordinary methods of thy grace? We can only lay our ſelves at thy feet; diſplay our miſery, and leave thee to conſider thine own compaſſion: O let that move thee to do for us whatever our wretched eſtate is in need of; O Lord hear; O Lord forgive, conſider and do it, if not for ours, yet for thy Names ſake: thou art *Jeſus* a Saviour, ſave thy People from their ſin, and let us not ſlide back by a perpetual back-ſliding; thou art the Head of the Church, O abandon not thy body, careſt thou not that ſhe periſh? Turn thee again, O Lord, renew her days as of old, ſanctifie and cleanſe her, that thou mayeſt again preſent her to thy ſelf a glorious Church, not having ſpot or wrinkle, and if ſhe muſt ſtill be militant, let it no longer be within her ſelf, but againſt ſpiritual wickedneſſes, the Ruler of the darkneſs of this World; till at laſt thou utterly

beat

beat down Satan under her feet; and transſlate her from this ſtate of warfare, to that of Triumph, and bliſs in the Kingdom of thy Father; which thou O bleſſed *Jeſus* haſt purchaſed with thy Bloud, and ſealed by thy Spirit. To which bleſſed Trinity be aſcrib'd all praiſe, honour, and glory, now and for ever. *Amen.*

O MOST gracious Lord, who out of thy boundleſs compaſſion to thy creatures, art never wanting in any means that may draw them to thy ſelf, we the unworthieſt of them deſire to give glory to thee, in a hearty acknowledgement that thou haſt in a moſt eminent and peculiar manner abounded to us of this Nation, afforded us all the methods that might either force or allure us to obedience. Lord thou wert pleaſed to keep us many years under thy chaſtening hand, thou broughteſt us into the ſnare and layedſt trouble upon our loyns, and didſt at once upbraid and puniſh our voluntary ſlaveries to our own luſts, by giving us up a prey to thoſe of others: and when thoſe judgments which ſhould have melted, ſerv'd but to harden us; when we ſeemed emulous to have our ſins out-vye thy Plagues, as they had before thy mercies, what could we then expect, but to find a judgement worthy of God? Such an irreverſible ruine, as might render us an hiſſing and aſtoniſhment to the whole Earth? But when we were thus ripened for thy greateſt ſeverity, then didſt thou, O Lord, prevent us with the bleſſings of thy goodneſs, miraculouſly interpoſe for our reſcue, and by ſuch undiſcernible ways return the captivity of our *Sion*, that we were deliver'd like them that dream. This, O Lord, was ſo ſtupendous, ſo amazing a mercy, that nothing can be more admirable, but only our prodigious ingratitude: Thou haſt ſignally atteſted thy ſelf to be a God that doſt wonders, and yet we who enjoy the benefit of them, neither conſider them as wonders, nor thee as God; but Atheiſtically deſie that Providence by which we ſubſiſt. Thou haſt reſtored to us our ſolemn worſhip, and we now ſay what a wearineſs is it? can ſeldom afford it our preſence, and ſeldomer our hearts. Thou haſt broken the yoke of uſurping oppreſſors, and we murmur no leſs at our lawful governours,

nours, as if all that we desired to reap by the exchange, were the guilt of speaking evil of Dignities. Thou hast freed us from the burden of unlawful imposed oaths; and we daily rend thy sacred name by voluntary impertinent ones. Thou hast delivered our estates from the rapine of others, and we sacrifice them to our own riot, and are never the more open-handed to our poor brethren for all thy munificence to us. Thou hast restor'd us the liberty of our Persons, and we proclaim licence to our lusts. These are the degenerous and base returns we have made; thus, O thus have we requited the Lord, and by it have again forc'd thee to resume thy scourge, and by a succession of signal judgements attest thy displeasure. And yet, O Lord, who regardeth the power of thy wrath? Who is there that repenteth him of his ways, or saith, what have I done? Never any soil made so ill return to so much husbandry, and since we bring forth nothing but Briars and Thorns, we may surely conclude we are nigh unto cursing: and, O Lord, what can we plead to avert the Sentence, who are as far from penitence as innocence, or how can we pray against that vengeance, which we make it our business to pull down? Nay, O Lord, shouldst thou as miraculously prolong, as thou didst restore our Peace, yet what will that avail us, if it serve but to set us at greater hostility with thee? Blessed Lord, there is but one mercy that we are capable of, and that is the melting our hearts, and if that cannot be done, but by casting us into a yet more fiery furnace; Lord do that or any thing with us, so we may come out vessels of honour meet for thy service. But yet, O Lord, if thy gentler methods may have any effect, be pleas'd to continue thy long-suffering; and though we have no pretence to mercy, yet do thou assert thine own work, be merciful because thou hast been so, and suffer us not to destroy what thou hast so miraculously preserv'd. Finally, O Lord, dispense to us whatsoever thou seest most apt to reduce us; and that thy outward applications may be no longer in vain, enforce and enliven them with thy inward: and by the sweet insinuations of thy blessed Spirit, subdue our obstinate perverseness; and give us at last such grace. as we may not turn into wantonness. O thou to whom all things are possible, who hast done such wonderful things for us, work a yet greater miracle in us,

and

and of a prophane, ungrateful, licentious Nation, make us an holy people unto thy self, that all ranks and conditions of men, may as universally and industriously combine to propitiate, as they have to provoke thee: that so by bringing forth fruits of Repentance, we may escape thy wrath both temporal and eternal. Grant this for his sake who died to work that deliverance for us: *Jesus* Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

FINIS.